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Bass Guitar

"THEY SAID, 'WHAT THE F***?'"

MIKE DIRNT

The bass part that blew Green Day's minds

IDA NIELSEN
"Prince pushed me to be better"

+

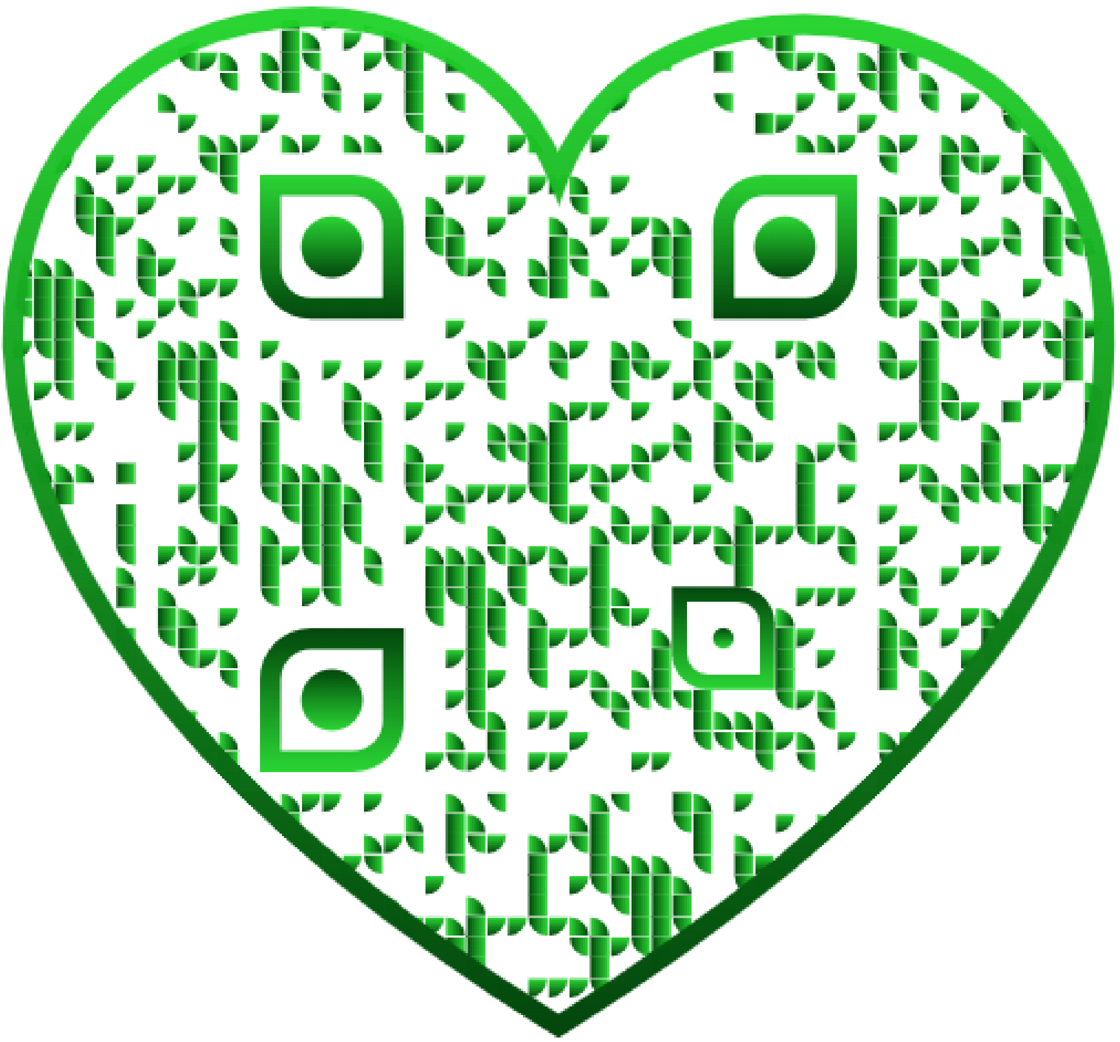
SCOTT REEDER
Desert-rock legend speaks!

RICHIE GOODS
Jazz vibes, Goods times

DAVID VINCENT
Morbid tales from the metal master

NEW GEAR EXCLUSIVE
First review of **Rickenbacker** Al Cisneros 4003AC

FUTURE



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ISSUE 181 MAY 2020

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What do punk rock, funk, classic jazz, desert rock, death metal, weightlifting and 'semantic chunking' (bear with us) have in common? They're all examined in detail in this fantastic issue of the world's premiere bass magazine, that's what – and all of them relate to the study, practice and performance of bass in some useful way. That's why we're here, after all, whether we're taking in Green Day bassist Mike Dirnt's immense new album, digging the deep grooves of Ida Nielsen's latest compositions or heading out to the prairie with sometime Kyuss bassist Scott Reeder. Between those three bass players alone, there's wisdom for the ages.

It doesn't stop there, of course, with the combined knowledge of (deep breath) bassists Lloyd Wood, Charlie Wooton, Taylor Lee, Joe Goldman, Lydia Martel, Kristiine Silinja, Michael Mondesir, David Vincent and Richie Goods to digest; it's our most interview-packed issue in decades.

Then, there's our bass educators Joe Hubbard, Stu Hamm, Antonio Angotti, Steve Lawson, Phil Mann and Stuart Clayton to contend with, and the real-life advice of working bassists Ruth Goller, Dave Swift, Daniel Firth and Michael McKeegan.

That's a heck of a team: together they'll make you the bassist you've always wanted to be – and with added goodness such as the first review ever of Sleep bassist Al Cisneros' signature Rickenbacker, there's no better place to be than this issue. Enjoy, and stay healthy.

Joel McIver, Editor

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THE LOWDOWN

News and views from the bass world, collated by *BGM*'s team of intrepid newshounds

HEART BREAKING

Getty

A supergroup calling themselves the Jaded Hearts Club have released a debut single, a cover of the Isley Brothers' 1962 song 'Nobody But Me'. Now, we're as sceptical as the next right-thinking bassist when we come up against these short-lived, generally not-very-super projects (where's Superheavy nowadays, eh?), but this one is of particular interest for two reasons.

One, it's formed of respected musicians including Matt Bellamy (Muse), Graham Coxon (Blur), Sean Payne (Zutons) and Miles Kane (Last Shadow Puppets), and two, Bellamy is playing bass this time. As Muse fans will know, his guitar playing is nothing less than otherworldly, so it'll be fascinating to see what he comes up with on the old four-string.

In his own words, "I read somewhere recently, which made me laugh, that rock is the new jazz. It's becoming an esoteric genre, but still with huge historical and cultural importance. Like jazz, which often reinvents old songs, the Jaded Hearts Club is continuing the tradition of how bands like the Beatles and the Stones started out – finding great soul and blues standards and recording them in a more modern style." None other than Sir Paul McCartney and Muse's regular bassist Chris Wolstenholme, an icon in our world, have played with the Jaded Hearts Club live, so let's see what transpires...
www.thejadedheartsclublive.com

WHY, MAN

The former Rolling Stones bassist Bill Wyman is auctioning off a collection of basses, amps and other gear, including a *Let It Bleed*-era Fender Mustang bass from 1969 and the Vox AC30 amp which he used to audition for the band. Auction house Julien's will be selling the Rolling Stones Archive on May 29-31 in Beverly Hills, California. The archive also includes stage-worn clothes, awards, personal items and artefacts from Wyman's career with Stones and solo work since leaving the band.

The aforementioned 1962 Vox AC30 'Normal' amp has an estimate of $80,000 to $100,000, while the Mustang is predicted to go for $300,000 to $500,000. There's also a 1978 Travis Bean custom short-scale bass ($200,000-$300,000), a 1974 Dan Armstrong ($100,000-$200,000) played on the band's 1975-76 tour; a black 1981 Steinberger Custom Short-Scale XL ($100,000-$200,000) used on the '82 tour; and a Framus Star Bass model 5/150 Black Rose Sunburst ($80,000-$100,000) which Wyman played from '63 to '65 period. Feeling wealthy? You know what to do.
www.juliensauctions.com

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STEP ON A SADOWSKY

New Sadowsky SPB-1 and SPB-2 Bass Preamp pedals are on the way, with MAP prices of $299 and $219.90 respectively. As the press release runs, "With the flexible combination of preamp and DI box, the Sadowsky Bass Preamp Pedal SPB-1 can be used in the effects setup in front of the amplifier or to connect your bass directly to a mixer or the PA. The SPB-2 is perfect for the use in the effects setup in the front end of the amplifier. The control options are kept simple with Volume, Treble and Bass... Ideal for upgrading old vintage instruments where you don't want to change the original electronics."
www.sadowsky.com, www.w-distribution.de

FELICITATIONS

The great Italian bassist Lorenzo Feliciati has a new four-track EP out, titled *Rumble*. "It represents a real musical evolution compared to my previous works," he tells us. "It offers a wide spectrum of my abilities, both as a composer and a bass player."
www.lorenzofeliciati.bandcamp.com

IN THE GROOVES

Albums rocking our office this month

NEW ALBUM

Fairport Convention, Shuffle And Go (2020)
Dave Pegg reveals 50 years' worth of awareness of the low end with the restrained but melodic lines he delivers on this energetic album.

OLD ALBUM

Jaco Pastorius, Jaco Pastorius (1975)
Yes, we know you've read about this album far too often – we get it. Sometimes, though, you have to go back to the source.

REALLY OLD ALBUM

Duke Ellington, The Duke Plays Ellington (1953)
Then again, this is the real source. Wendell Marshall is on flying form on this surprisingly modern-sounding album.

Getty

DEAR JOHN

A new authorised biography of the late Who bassist John Entwistle has just been published, writes the great man's friend Chris Charlesworth. His review of *The Ox: Last Of The Great Rock Stars*, written by Paul Rees, follows.

"There is more than a touch of melancholy about the life of John Entwistle as conveyed by former Q Editor Paul Rees. Less conspicuous than his Who colleagues but no less fascinating, Entwistle's story echoes what might be termed 'The Bassist's Curse' – to be undervalued, unfulfilled and frustrated – and it probably led to his death at the relatively young age of 57, at least indirectly.

"Entwistle, nicknamed The Ox, was unquestionably one of – if not the – finest bass players of his generation. Nevertheless, he remained distant, a character trait reinforced by the high profile antics of Pete Townshend, Roger Daltrey and Keith Moon. Content only on stage or in the studio, elsewhere he retreated into himself, chasing his demons in ways that did him no good: booze, drugs, women, junk food, reckless shopping sprees and an obstinacy that translated into denial. Many interviewees for this book – and they include both his ex-wives and son, as well as musician friends – all seemed incapable of confronting John about these issues simply because John did everything possible to avoid confrontations.

"This very readable biography leans more towards the tragedy of the overindulged rock star and his unsettled life than the music he created. Those looking for an insight into his extraordinary bass technique will be disappointed; although Rees heaps plenty of praise on John, he hasn't spoken to other bass players about how John did what he did. One exchange with McCartney in 1964, however, will interest our readers: 'Coming off stage after our first set I found myself face to face with Paul,' writes John in an extract from an unpublished autobiography he was writing before he died. "'The Rickenbacker sounded pretty good. What's it like?', he asked me. 'It's great, nice trebly strings; you just have to watch the angle of the strings in the nut,' I told him. I guess he must have believed me – he bought one soon after.'"

LOW LIFE

Tax The Heat bassist and BIMM Live Performance tutor Antonio Angotti shares his advice for playing festivals

BIMM INSTITUTE

Hello, bass players! I'm starting festival season early with the next column in my Player Series. This month, I will be sharing advice on how to be effective in the world of music festivals and open-air shows. These events can be a completely different experience to playing venues or club gigs, so it's important that you know how to adapt and what to expect. Get stuck in with these essential tips...

Getty

PREPARATION

Festival shows are some of the most demanding setups and pack-downs that you will encounter in the live world. You rarely get a soundcheck, unless you're the headliner, and you have a limited window of time to get your gear ready and on stage. Being prepared with a tech spec and monitor mix preferences for each band member will really help, as well as knowing exactly what settings you need to dial in on your amp and effects. Learning to communicate with the monitor engineer mid-song will also enable you to refine the mix you're receiving in your wedge or in-ear monitors. At the same time, when the conditions aren't favourable, we have to keep a poker face. If you let adverse circumstances affect your performance, this will negatively impact you and your band from an audience perspective.

GEAR

As with any live setting, it's important to have spares. At a festival, continuity is key with your backups, so a spare bass of the same make and model and a spare amp or bass head will prove invaluable if anything goes down. Spare cables and patch leads are also a must, and if you're using a wireless system, make sure to check that there is no interference taking place while you set up backstage. Ultimately, make sure your backups are all set up and ready to go, making for an easy transition should you need to switch to them.

EQ

A lot of bass players get their tones wrong at festivals. The assumption is that the sound and EQ we use at home, in rehearsals or at venues is one that will also work at a festival. This is why you may find it hard, when watching bands at a festival, to hear the details of the bass parts. My suggestion here is to EQ with less emphasis on the low end. Remember that you're going through a much larger PA than normal, which will naturally add low end to your sound. Concentrate on mids and look to boost around 600 to 800hz for some clarity in your sound.

> "WHEN THE CONDITIONS ARE NOT FAVOURABLE, KEEP A POKER FACE"

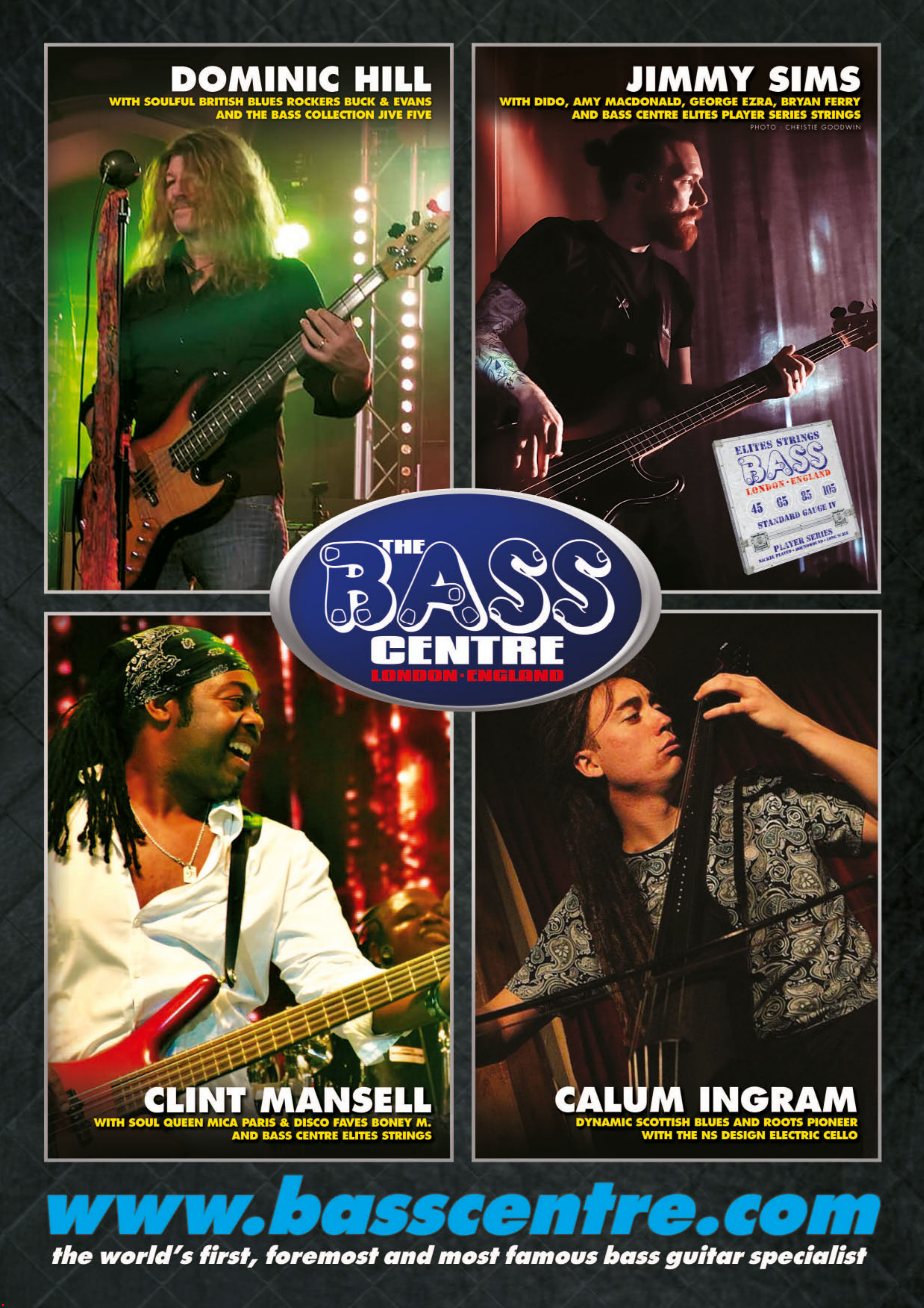
GO BIG

Bear in mind that open-air shows generally pull larger crowds, resulting in a good portion of them being further away from the stage. Their perception of the band is therefore quite distant, so push your movement and stagecraft to the extreme. You might feel that your head-nodding is giving off energy, but to the people at the back, you're hardly moving. Make use of the stage space and be more dynamic with your visual performance.

CREATE A SHOW

Festivals tend to be saturated with bands, so sticking out and making an impact is crucial. Don't just pick your eight best tracks to play, think about the demographic you're playing to and which of your songs will win them over. You should also look at how you tie the set together, from intro tapes which create anticipation to segues and then to impressive endings. Being imaginative with your overall production will add a level of professionalism and consideration that other bands may well neglect.

Do you have any questions surrounding live performance? Message me at @MrA_TaxTheBass and I'll broach them in an upcoming issue. Catch you all next time!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THE FORUMS

Eloquent insights, surprising scoops and deep discussion from Planet Bass's online communities

NO TREBLE

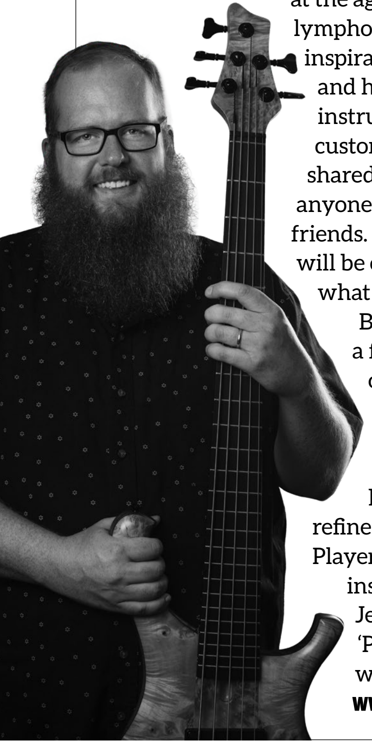
KEVIN JOHNSON

Let's support each other through the tough times

Sadly, this past month has been another tragic period in the bass world. It began when it was announced that Juan Alderete was in a bicycle accident that left him in a coma with a serious type of traumatic brain injury known as diffuse axonal injury. Weeks after his accident, he's been showing signs of improvement such as responding to commands by nodding his head.

Alderete has been a role model for bassists for decades with his work in Racer X, the Mars Volta, Big Sir, Deltron 3030 and more. He has freely shared his vast knowledge of effects on his website PedalsAndEffects.com. His most recent gig has been laying down the low end for Marilyn Manson, and it was revealed that Alderete will be featured on the singer's next album. Unfortunately, his current situation does not allow him to take care of himself, let alone get back to work. A GoFundMe campaign has been started to help Alderete and his family continue to thrive as they deal with this enormous obstacle. Please consider giving back to this pillar of our community at: www.gofundme.com/f/fundraiser-juan-alderete-brain-injury.

On February 12, legendary luthier Mike Lull passed away at the age of 66 from non-Hodgkins lymphoma. "Mike was a visionary and inspiration for the music community, and he left his indelible mark on every instrument he ever touched and every customer he ever helped," his company shared. "In fact, Mike never considered anyone 'customers', they were all his friends. Mike's dedicated staff and family will be carrying on his legacy as this is what Mike wanted."



Based just outside of Seattle, Lull got a foothold in the industry by working on instruments during the grunge boom for bands such as Pearl Jam, Soundgarden and Nirvana. His own line of bass creations pay homage to the classics with modern refinements to improve playability. Players from every type of music use his instruments, ranging from Pearl Jam's Jeff Ament to Randy Jackson to Eric 'Pik Funk' Smith. Our thoughts are with Mike's family and friends.

www.notreble.com

BASSCHAT

SILVIA BLUEJAY

Gigging for yourself? We love it

Most Basschat members gig regularly with their bands and compare notes on their experience. It's not always as enjoyable as we would hope, and we often end up venting our frustration about disappointing gigs to sympathetic ears. We explore the reasons why we gig – ambition, money, fun, or the buzz from a happy audience – and those for not wanting to gig at all. A recent thread is about gigging for ourselves – that is, as musicians, always finding something to appreciate in, and learn from, any gig, even bad ones.

It's common to have a bad gig, where the band's performance is not at fault, but the audience is uninterested, chatting or simply not there. As pubs and venues try to make ends meet, there is much competition for the crowd's attention, such as sports on TV screens, areas given to dining and beer gardens.

That forum thread reminds us that bad gigs can be an opportunity to get tighter musically, both as individuals and as a band, learn to remain unflappable, and have fun with our bandmates by creating a spark between us, regardless of the audience. If it ends up being a paid rehearsal, that's still better than an unpaid one, or indeed, not rehearsing at all. Resenting being on stage can make the situation worse, so our advice is to have a professional attitude and do our best; that way, we can hopefully beat the boredom, dilute awkward situations, and make it all tolerable.

If we walked out of bad gigs, as a band we'd never learn the highly useful skills needed to deal with them, which include a thick skin and a sense of humour. If, for instance, emerging originals bands refused to gig unless faced with a large, enthusiastic audience, most of them would probably never get near a stage, and miss out on one important aspect of being musicians.

But while it's preferable to gig than not to gig, if most of the time the exercise isn't fun, we should take a look at what we may be doing wrong: repertoire, choice of venue, organisation, and so on.

www.basschat.co.uk

Kevin Johnson photo: Luigi Crespo Bryan R Tyler photo: Bella Grace Tyler

TALKBASS

BRYAN R TYLER

Why can't P be friends?

Tribalism is all too common in online communities, and musician forums are no exception. This manifests itself in oft-repeated debates including active versus passive, four-string versus five-string, and bolt-on versus neck-through. One of the strangest – and most common – is the old Fender Precision versus Jazz debate.

Threads on 'Which is better – a P or a J?' were old when I joined TalkBass way back in 2002. Yet they continue to persist, with several new variations on the topic popping up this week alone. They often begin well enough, with someone asking which they should get. Someone will then say that a P is less versatile than a J, which leads to folks pointing out how many different scenarios a P can be used in to prove its versatility.

Then, a Jazz advocate may point out that a J can be and has been used in nearly as many situations and still has more tonal variety, being able to sound almost like a P, while a P can't sound like a J. Sooner or later, sides begin to form, where P fanatics will claim that the versatility is in their hands, and that if you're relying on the instrument for it then there's a flaw in your playing. This may be countered with accusations of P fans not playing a wide variety of music and so on.

Obviously, when it comes to nearly any preference-based debate, there is no right or wrong. A Jazz may have more built-in tonal options, but if you don't need them those extra controls could just get in the way. A Precision may sit in a traditional mix perfectly, but if you don't like the P sound, it's not going to be a good bass for you.

Basses are tools to get a job done. Most pros have at least one of each type for recording. Taking any sort of personal involvement in them beyond that will only cloud your judgment on staying objective and using the best tool for the job. Don't fall into the trap of letting your personal preference become something that defines you.

www.talkbass.com

FOR BASS PLAYERS ONLY

JON LIEBMAN

What's the good word from FBPO?

Interviewing Michael Rhodes was a great way to kick off 2020. Recorded in the back of Joe Bonamassa's touring bus, the video includes a retrospective of Michael's brilliant career and the work he's done with Willie Nelson, Dolly Parton, Elton John and so many others. Michael's interview inspired a provocative blog, pointing out that just because the bass is a supportive instrument doesn't mean the bass player should be "shackled" to the back of the stage. Good point, Michael!

What a fascinating story Davey Faragher shared with us. Growing up as one of eight kids, Davey was always surrounded by music. In addition to joining his brothers, who had achieved significant success – including performing the opening theme to *The Brady Bunch* during the show's first season – Davey has worked with John Hiatt, Sheryl Crow, David Crosby, and countless others. Since 2001, he's been holding down the low end for Elvis Costello & The Imposters.

Sitting down with Michael Tobias was very special. During the interview, Michael announced that, after making an estimated 4,000 instruments, he's handing the reins to his company, Michael Tobias Design, to his son Daniel. We got some great footage of Daniel, too, beaming proudly about the legacy his dad created and future plans for MTD.

One blog that got a lot of people talking had to do with whether bass should be practised with or without an amp. It touched on tone and effects, and how everyone claims that "sound comes from the hands..." There are definitely two schools of thought on the subject. Give it a read and weigh in with your opinion.

From the FBPO bass instruction department, our just-launched Blues Bass course is currently all the rage, drawing new members from New Jersey, California, Illinois, Florida, New Hampshire, and abroad. Thanks for joining, everyone. Let's play bass!

www.forbassplayersonly.com

BASS OF **TOMORROW**

Only the best is good enough – even after 51 years, as amp mastermind Robert Gallien of Gallien-Krueger tells us

Words: Hywel Davies

Since 1968, Gallien-Krueger Bass Amplification has maintained an unequivocal reputation for having sculpted the tone of some of the most iconic bass players on the planet, from Dave Holland to Flea. From humble beginnings in his garage in San Jose, California, Robert Gallien – who co-founded the company with Richard Krueger – began a journey like few others in our world. Looking back, did he ever think that his DIY activities would go so far, we ask?

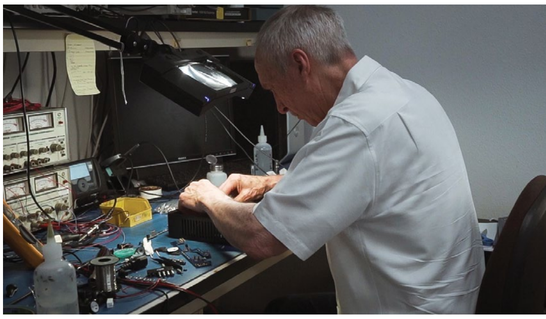
"I hear comments like this now and then – and while they're always heart-warming, I have to keep things in perspective," he smiles. "I take the design considerations seriously, always keeping the end player in mind. The player feedback which I get confirms that I get a lot of it right, but these are instrument amplifiers, not the iPhone."

This year saw the introduction of the Legacy series, which represents 50 years of design and innovation and the cream of the G-K crop. What's the story behind this series? "My designs reflect a continuous evolution," he explains, "from the 226A back in 1968 up to the Legacy 800 in 2019. Each design has built on lessons from the previous effort, and always take advantage of the latest developments in technology and devices. I'm always evaluating what could have been done better, and what device improvements are available.

> "THESE AMPLIFIERS ARE BUILT INSIDE AND OUT LIKE NO OTHER"

"These amplifiers are built inside and out like no other," he adds. "The entire series of three heads and five combos were designed together, so they share the same design principles. I wanted the series to cover a wide range of output power and speaker configurations. The idea behind the combos was to take them to a level that made them worthy not just for practice and small gigs. It looks like the Legacy series is going to earn a special place alongside the 800RB, which I look back at warmly."

Of the many models in the G-K back catalogue, which stands out as the most important? "That is a difficult question, because all these amplifiers hold a special place for me," he reasons. "But looking at the 50 years of my work, I would have to say that the 800RB stands out as a real paradigm-changer. When it arrived, bass amps came in wood boxes, were mostly tube designs and were ridiculously heavy. The 800RB came in an aluminium chassis that was rackmountable, sounded fantastic



and was incredibly light. As it turns out, it redefined what a bass amp should be."

What does the future hold for Mr Gallien? "I intend to keep doing what I'm doing until I can't do it any more," he says. "The best part is I get to work with my son Forest, who takes care of all the social media, artist relations and marketing, including the photography that puts the face on what we're doing. He's been involved with the company since childhood and as well as being a great bass player, he's a great resource during the design process. I also love working with the small group of people at the company, some having been here for over 20 years. I get up each morning excited to continue this adventure – and I look forward to where it leads me."

www.gallien-krueger.com

THE WOODSHED

Ace luthier Rob Elrick investigates onboard preamps and asks 'Why?'

> **"WHAT LIES BEHIND US AND WHAT LIES BEFORE US ARE TINY MATTERS COMPARED TO WHAT LIES WITHIN US"**
> RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Behind us, the days of passive instruments and analogue technology. Before us, digital technology and miniaturisation. Tiny matters compared to what lies within? Perhaps. But what lies within modern basses? Emerson might not have had our problems in mind, but he was certainly onto something. This month, I'll address the matter of onboard preamps and their common misuse.

Having spent over 27 years as an exhibitor at a variety of trade shows around the world, I've witnessed some interesting habits from the range of characters who stop to demonstrate basses – but there is one form of behaviour that always leaves me utterly confounded. A player ambles over, picks up a bass, and immediately turns every knob to 10. After I intervene to reset all the controls to zero and explain each individual function, the player defiantly rolls them all back to 10, proclaiming, 'That's my sound – full-on!'

Swell. But that assertion is not far off. When you dime all the controls of an onboard preamp, a few things happen: all frequencies are attenuated equally; the output volume increases; and you introduce noise, full-on. At maximum boost, the highest level of noise a preamp can create is introduced into the signal exiting the bass. While some players have declared that they 'can live with a little noise', it's likely they don't understand that the noise they're committing to is actually harmonic distortion. Harmonic distortion is not generally considered desirable, particularly if it can be limited, which it can, by using an onboard circuit properly. While the performance and quality of onboard preamps can vary wildly, they all suffer from the same problem – many players simply do not use them correctly.

The early onboard preamps found in exotic basses and custom installations from the 1970s presented technological wizardry for the era. Those circuits were often only fully understood by their respective owners, who were typically players as esoteric as the instruments they wielded. By the 1980s, though still found primarily in boutique instruments, onboard circuits were becoming not only more common, but also more practical to understand and operate. As curiosity surrounding boutique instruments escalated, manufacturers of lower-priced instruments took note and began including sometimes elaborate, but not always sophisticated, tone-shaping devices.

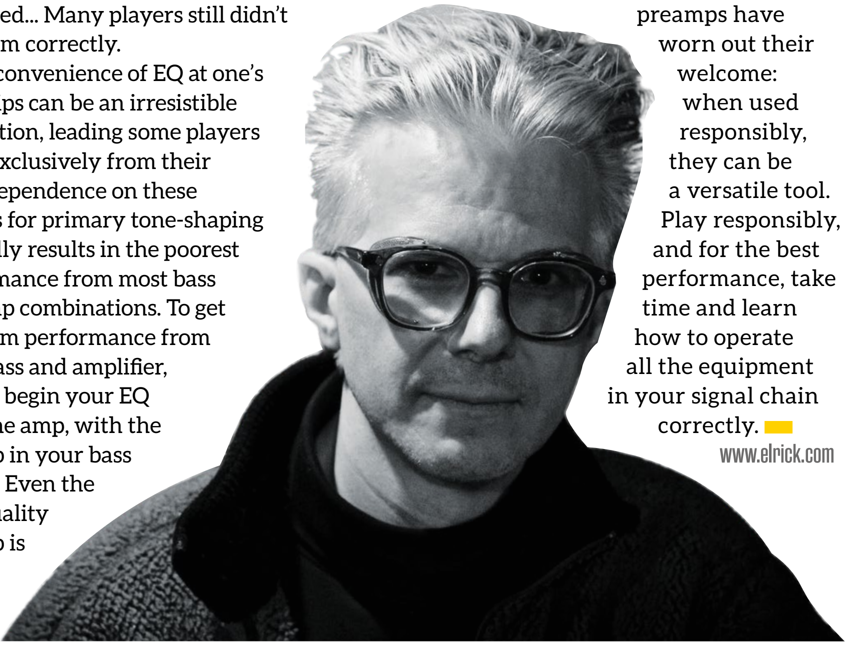
The notion that including an active preamp added value to an instrument was growing. Intent on adding dollars in value by investing only pennies in their basses, manufacturers of inexpensive instruments happily obliged consumer demand by incorporating cheap circuits. By the early 90s, onboard preamps became more ubiquitous, but their functionality was largely homogenised into basic two- and three-band equalisation. This simplification made them easier to operate with little-to-no instruction, but one fault remained... Many players still didn't use them correctly.

The convenience of EQ at one's fingertips can be an irresistible temptation, leading some players to EQ exclusively from their bass. Dependence on these devices for primary tone-shaping generally results in the poorest performance from most bass and amp combinations. To get optimum performance from your bass and amplifier, always begin your EQ from the amp, with the preamp in your bass set flat. Even the best-quality preamp is ideally utilised only for minor boosts and cuts when playing live. When recording, they're actually best turned off, as higher-quality tone-shaping devices are available in most recording environments.

Unfortunately, the least discreet tone-shaping circuit in any signal path is always the one powered by a nine-volt battery. For this reason, even in the case of instruments with the highest-quality circuits, the preamp can degrade the quality of the source signal even when set flat. How does that happen? Since they can't supply bass frequencies not present in the source signal, bass boost circuits cannot correct for a pickup with attenuated bass response. Also, all low power op-amps used in preamps produce hiss. 9v alkaline batteries have a relatively high internal composite resistance, which effects output. For example, when a bass note is played hard it requires a level of current, which a 9v battery can't supply. Battery resistance also increases as a it depletes, meaning that the performance of a preamp continually changes as the battery ages.

It comes as little surprise that passive instruments have made a comeback – their limited circuitry often leads players away from their worst impulses. This is not to say that onboard preamps have worn out their welcome: when used responsibly, they can be a versatile tool. Play responsibly, and for the best performance, take time and learn how to operate all the equipment in your signal chain correctly.

www.elrick.com



THEORY OF THE MONTH

TRINITY COLLEGE LONDON

Overwater BASSES

Five steps to remember any musical concept, delivered by the great Joe Hubbard

Do you struggle with remembering musical concepts and how they're used? It's okay, as this is very common. If you've been playing for years, it's safe to say that you've probably forgotten more techniques than you learned in music school – and if you're a newcomer to the bass guitar, get ready for the same thing to happen.

Wait a minute! Does this mean that all is lost, and you're destined to wade your way through a cacophony of musical concepts for the rest of your life, hoping that one or two of them stick by the end? No! I'm going to share with you five extremely simple steps that will help you to remember any musical concept – and make it stick.

Before I enumerate them, let's explore an important concept when learning new principles and concepts, called the Dimmer Switch Phenomenon. There are many people who believe that learning is an all-or-nothing experience. Imagine you're learning a new musical concept for the first time, and hey, presto! You suddenly develop a complete awareness of how to immediately add it into your vocabulary.

As we all know, it doesn't happen like this. That would be like turning a light switch from off to on. A better metaphor for understanding how to inculcate a new technique or concept would be to envisage the process as a dimmer switch. This is how learning new concepts works: gradually and incrementally.

STEP 1: PRACTISE A SERIES OF EXERCISES THAT RELATE TO THE CONCEPT

The first step when learning any new musical concept is to understand how it is going to translate to the bass guitar. The way that this is done is through developing a series of exercises that will enable you to get over the technical and instrumental hurdles, and then start to learn what the concept sounds like. Sadly, this is usually where most bass players' education begins and ends.

STEP 2: PRACTISE THE CONCEPT IN CONTEXT

Once you've sorted out any technical issues on your bass and become familiar with the sound of the concept you've learned, then you're ready to put the concept into multiple musical contexts. It is essential to study a concept in its natural habitat. This would consist of writing bass-lines and solos over static chords; familiar chord progressions such as II-V-I; standard songs; or freely, with no chord changes. If you skip Step 1, you will most likely encounter resistance – because it's important to get past any technical hurdles as well as understand the sound of the concept that you've learned.

STEP 3: MAKE A PERSONAL CONNECTION WITH THE CONCEPT

Making a personal connection with a concept is best done through composition. Writing a piece of music in which you purposefully use a specific concept will enable you to absorb what you have learned at a much higher level almost immediately. You don't have to write a symphony; rather, in the beginning just think about short 16-bar etudes in which you will document an original interpretation of what you have learned.

STEP 4: LEARN THE HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT

Do some research about how the musical concept has been used throughout the history of Western music in classical, rock, jazz, pop and so on. This will dovetail nicely with the process of transcription, in which you will find out how somebody else used this particular concept.

Jeff Berlin: master of theory acquisition

Tina K

STEP 5: USE 'SEMANTIC CHUNKING' TO ORGANISE THE CONCEPT

Read the list of following musical concepts carefully, then cover the page and try to write down as many of them as you can remember:

8th note, tritone substitution, melodic retrograde, hemiolas, II-V-I, approach notes, metric modulation, secondary dominants, motific development, odd times, diatonic substitution chords, tensions.

How did you do? Most likely you were able to remember some but not all, right? It would be a lot easier to remember these 12 different concepts if I 'chunked' them into three different categories – see table below. This allows you to categorise every musical concept you will ever learn into just three categories, which are much easier to remember. Until next time, practise smart, work hard and play creatively!

RHYTHM	MELODY	HARMONY
8TH NOTE	MELODIC RETROGRADE	TRITONE SUBSTITUTION
HEMIOLAS	APPROACH NOTES	II-V-I
METRIC MODULATION	MOTIFIC DEVELOPMENT	SECONDARY DOMINANTS
ODD TIMES	TENSIONS	DIATONIC SUBSTITUTION CHORDS

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TECHNIQUE OF THE MONTH

Ecki

No matter what your level of bass expertise may be, you need to read the words of the great Stuart Hamm

Welcome, friends! This month, I would like to start a series of articles that preach, and demonstrate, two of the concepts that are at the core of my teaching. These are hand positions, and using open strings to get smoothly up and down the neck of your bass, while subliminally getting you more familiar with the harmonic layout of the neck of your bass guitar.

All bass-lines outline chords, and are composed from the scales that accompany those chords. If you can train your hand to learn some basic hand positions that outline the most frequently used chords, you're all set! The bass is tuned all in 4ths, so each hand position will work from whatever starting point you pick, or whatever key you choose to play in.

Take a look at my left hand in its normal, relaxed position (bottom right). Now look at my left hand in the same position on the neck of my bass (top right). My go-to position is the outline of a Major arpeggio, with middle finger on the root (in this case a G), first finger on the major 3rd (B), and my pinky barring the 5th and octave (D and G) with my third finger supporting my pinky or playing the 5th. You should try both of these positions for your third finger and see what works best for you.

Spread your hand and fingers out and let's play that G Major arpeggio in two different octaves on the neck. **Example 1** shows us what it looks and feels like in the root position, starting with your middle finger on the G, which is the 3rd fret on the E string.

Using the same fingering and basic hand position, let's go up an octave now for **Example 2** and play a G Major arpeggio starting with the G on the 10th fret of your A string, with your pinky on the octave G on the 12th fret of the G string.

See – it's the same everywhere on the neck of your bass. You can now play a major arpeggio (root, Major 3rd, 5th, octave) in any key. Bravo!

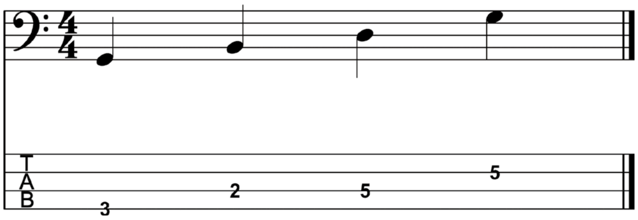
Now, what if we wanted to play a two-octave arpeggio? This is where using open notes will help us get up and down the neck. Here's the concept: when you play that open string, in this case the open G or D, you use that time when your left hand is not busy fretting any notes to jump to the next position. Note that you're not just jumping to the

Stu's go-to hand position when placed against the neck of a bass

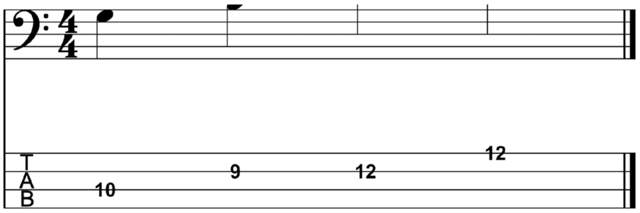
Stu's hand resting in a normal, relaxed position

> **"IF YOU CAN TRAIN YOUR HAND TO LEARN SOME BASIC POSITIONS THAT OUTLINE THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED CHORDS, YOU'RE ALL SET!"**

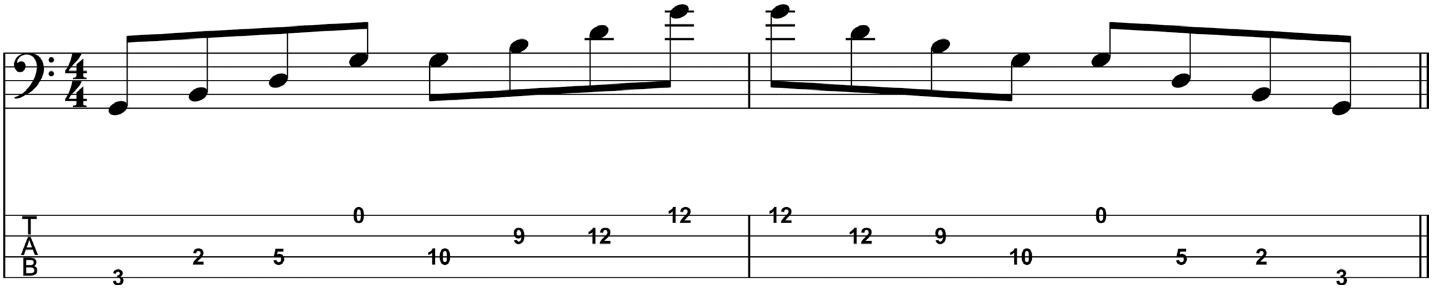
Example 1



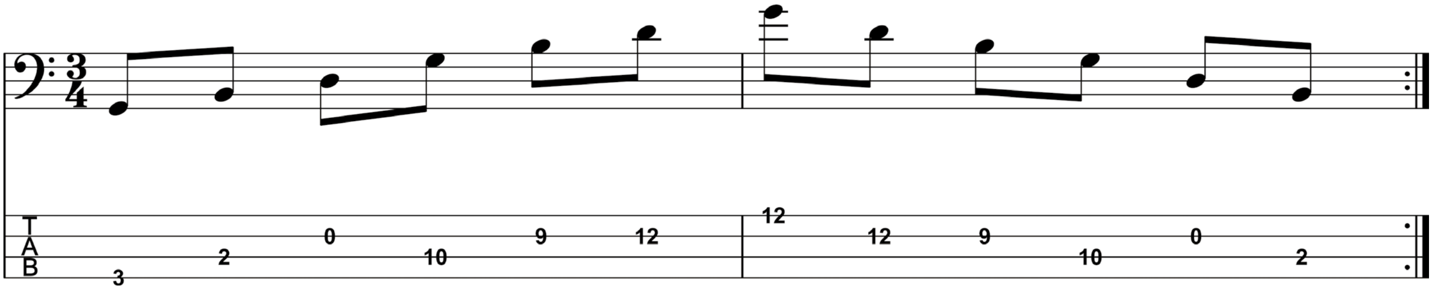
Example 2



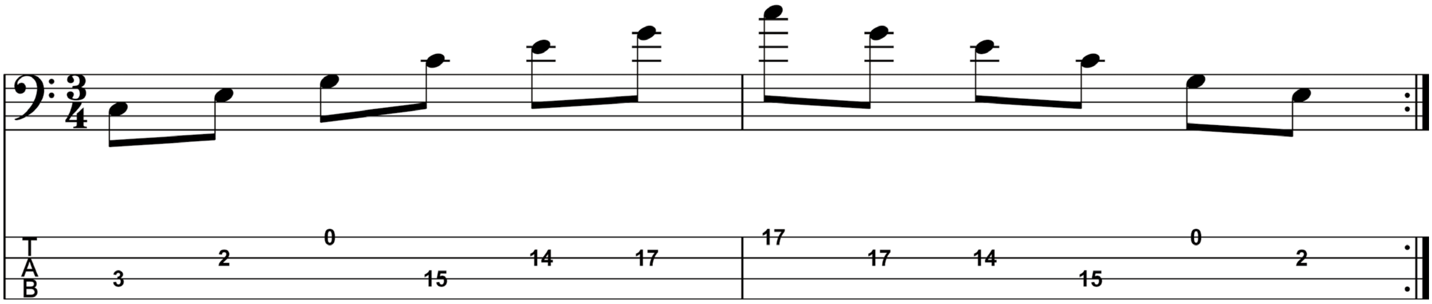
Example 3



Example 4



Example 5



root note, you're moving your whole hand to be in position, ready to play the whole arpeggio.

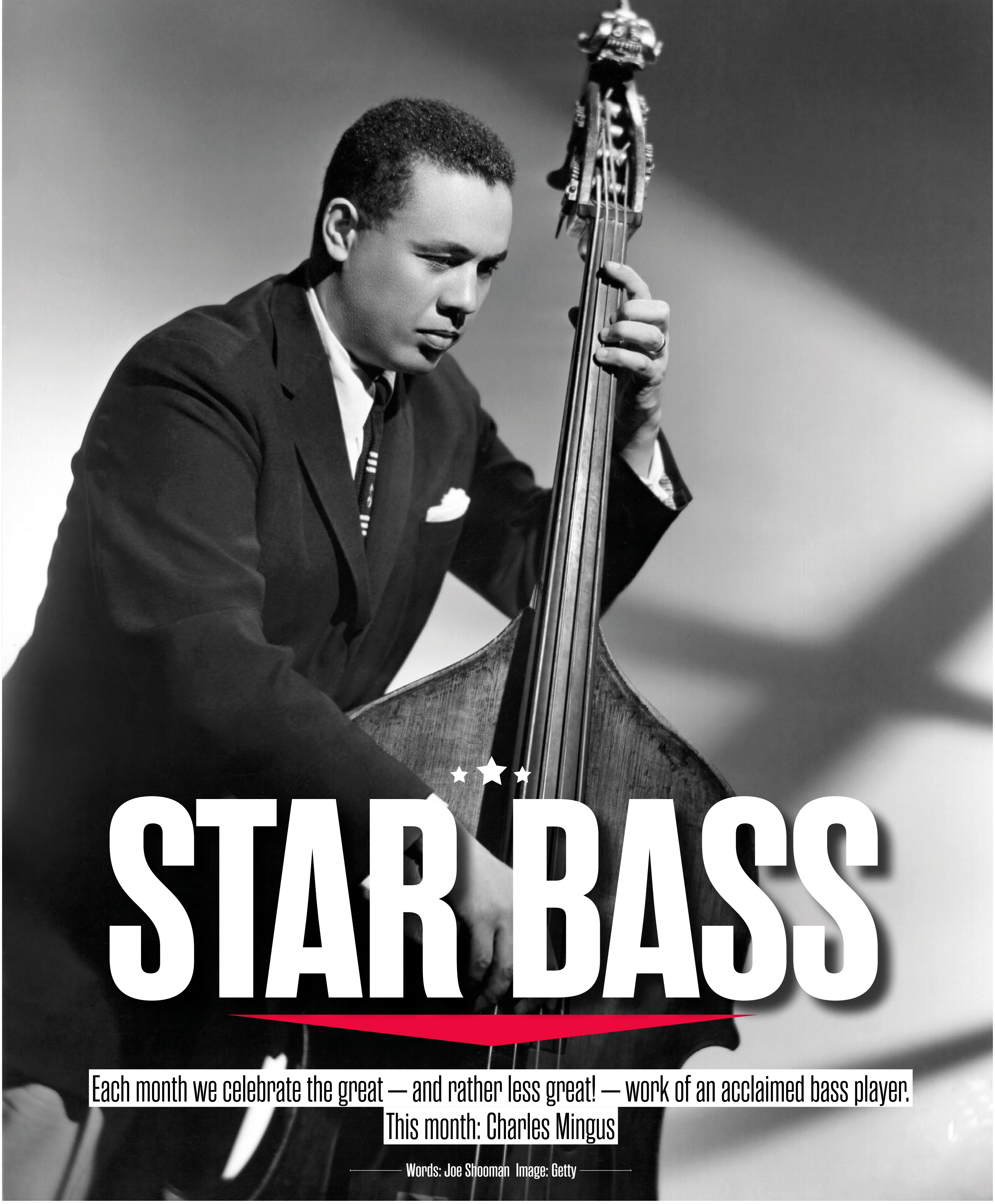
In **Example 3** you fret the root, 3rd and 5th and then play the open G. While the open G is ringing, jump your left hand up to the next position. Here, your middle finger will be on the G on the 10th fret of your A string, and your pinky on the octave of G on the 12th fret of the G string. Next, come back down the arpeggio, this time using the open G to move your hand back down to the root position, G.

Another way to use this approach, and one that may be a smoother transition – seen here in **Example 4** – is to play in 3/4 and use the open D to get up and down the neck. In this example, please note that we are not doubling the root note on top in either octave.

Getting the hang of this? Are you quickly moving your whole hand into position, taking advantage of the open string when your left hand is not occupied fretting a note? Let's take this concept and apply it to a C Major arpeggio, using the open G to free up your left hand to move up and down the neck, as seen in **Example 5**.

This is just the start of what I have in store for you. Please experiment and come up with new ways yourself to use this idea. If you're one of those crazy kids that plays one of those new-fangled five- or six-string basses, you can easily play **Examples 3** and **4** in the keys of D Major and F Major. See you next month!

www.stuarthamm.net



STAR BASS

Each month we celebrate the great — and rather less great! — work of an acclaimed bass player. This month: Charles Mingus

Words: Joe Shooman Image: Getty

Improvisation genius Charles Mingus, Jr. changed the world of jazz bass forever. He actually started on trombone before moving to cello, but the overt racism of the 1950s closed classical doors to him, and Mingus settled on double bass in high school. He studied the instrument under NY Phil's Herman Reinshagen, and his classical influences helped him break through as an innovator, working with Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Teddy Edwards, Lionel Hampton and the great Charlie Parker. His Jazz Workshop brought together a host of fabulous musicians to try and keep up with his flights of fancy, before Mingus smashed through the early 1960s with a series of boundary-stretching albums. Sadly, in the 1970s Mingus was diagnosed with ALS, or motor neurone disease, which robbed him of his co-ordination, stopped him playing the bass and ended his life in 1979 at the relatively early age of 56. He didn't suffer fools gladly, and was infamous for his temper, particularly if he felt his audiences weren't paying enough attention. His legacy and influence, however, will long outlast such moments of red mist, while his 1971 autobiography *Beneath The Underdog* is required (if graphic) reading.

MUST-HAVE ALBUM

The Black Saint And The Sinner Lady (1963)

Mingus' rhythm and huge tone are at their height on one of the seminal albums of avant-garde, experimental jazz. Recorded in just one day, it bursts with innovation, bringing together bluesy lines with flamenco, swing, bebop, gypsy and Latin elements, with additional intrigue added by significant overdubbing – which in 1963 was virtually unheard of. It's a single piece in six tracks, or four movements, which manages to traverse a vast swathe of human emotion, from aggression to frustration, from sweet melody to challenging, dissonant energy. The 11-piece orchestra was given the nod to push the boundaries in rehearsals for this, and Mingus bounces off them with dissonance, tension, release and a righteous fire that ignites the whole scene. The liner notes were written by his psychologist Ed Pollock, who may have been able to observe what the inside of Mingus' mind looked like: this album is the sonic equivalent. Nuanced textures and absurdly superior techniques create disorder and chaos, from which emerges a harsh beauty that endures through the ages.

WORTHY CONTENDER

Mingus Ah Um (1959)

The great man really began to cut loose in the late 1950s and early 60s; this is perhaps his first great LP. There's gospel-tinged post-bop and deliciously held-back pressure on 'Better Git It In Your Soul'; shuffle and stop-time in 'Boogie Stop Shuffle', which is based on a 12-bar blues; and the instrumental 'Fables Of Faubus'. Bass-wise, Mingus slaps the living hell out of the instrument in its double-time rampaging. He was always ahead of his time, politically as well as musically; for example, on 'Jelly Roll' he bounces the bow stick directly on the strings to achieve a percussive effect that has been discussed for 60 years. The tribute to Lester Young, 'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat', is small-hours jazz-blues at its lovely, wrecked-soul best – and there's some wonderful high-register work from Mingus amid the generally understated line.

COOL GROOVES

Duke Ellington, Charlie Mingus, Max Roach Money Jungle (1963)

Duke Ellington was ostensibly one of Charles Mingus' heroes, and when they worked together the results were spectacularly mercurial. This being Mingus, the sessions weren't all sweetness and light: the bassist flounced off halfway through, in protest about Max Roach's playing. Ellington persuaded him to stay and complete the recordings, which hit their apex with the tense title track. Mingus scribbled the sound with plenty of fingernails, using blues-style string bends and an astounding attack. Anger, as John Lydon observed, is an energy: Mingus had already proved that two decades earlier. A further Ellington-Mingus-Roach session was mooted, but for obvious reasons never came to pass.

WILD CARD

Cumbia & Jazz Fusion (1978)

Two 20-plus-minute pieces comprise the entirety of this eccentric LP, both written for the movie *Todo Modo*. A big band delivers enthralling performances, not least on the 28-minute title track. Cumbia is a traditional Colombian folk style, possibly Afro-Caribbean in origin: Mingus squares that musical circle here with an earthiness and ambition borne on a career of musical and personal exploration. Sophisticated and challenging, but still very recognisably Mingus, there's some gorgeous arco work to be heard on the eponymous track, which then develops into a tropically-tinged, kinetic piece of work. The bassist employs the full range of his instrument to full effect, although over the years some aficionados have noted a decline in his previously-immaculate technique. Regardless, this is fusion at its best, and 'Music For Todo Modo' is a fine jam indeed.

AVOID AT ALL COSTS

Town Hall Concert (1962)

The negatives really piled up for what should have been a triumphant live run-through of new material, as a host of issues blighted this New York City-recorded half-hour release. The 30-piece orchestra featured many of the top names in jazz at the time, but was palpably under-rehearsed due to Mingus not having finished writing the songs. There were sound issues throughout and it all unfolded in front of a live audience, piling the pressure on even more. At one stage, Mingus even told the audience to 'get their money back', because it was intended to be a recording session rather than a gig. There are glimmers of inspiration on the original LP, but it wouldn't be until 1994 that it was rescued from total failure by Blue Note's extended *The Complete Town Hall Concert*. Several bonus tracks. which included an alternate take of Part One of the legendary 'Epitaph' suite, bolstered the content.

DAYS OF OUR LIVES

What's more punk than playing the biggest arenas in the world, giving your new album a frankly unprintable title and playing a bass with an ancient shape? Nothing, that's what. We know because we asked Green Day bassist Mike Dirnt...

Words: Mike Brooks

Photos: Greg Schneider, Getty

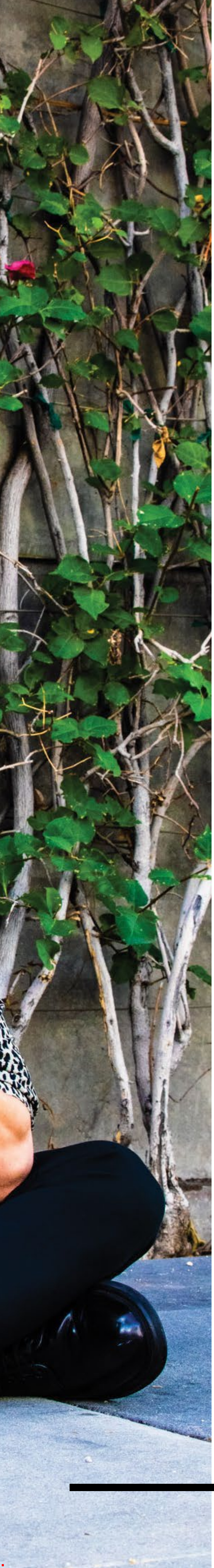
Mike Dirnt is an often-cited bass influence in these pages and beyond, responsible for drawing many a young player into the joys of bassdom. Furthermore, he blew away the definition of a 'punk bassist' years ago. The man has far more artillery in his cannon than that, as we discovered when we caught up with Dirnt for a much-needed update and some enlightening conversation.

With their new album *Father Of All Motherfuckers* recently unleashed on the world, Green Day are in a good place. The new record covers a lot of ground, as Dirnt confirms: "There's definitely some 1950s rock'n'roll in there, and we've got some 70s glam in there, too; a little bit of Phil Spector and I'm playing with some newer tones that are pushing forward. What was nice was that I was able to play a lot lower, a lot of deeper notes, and drop more actual sub-low bass than I ever have before."

Sounds intriguing... "Well, I've always gone back and forth between the punk side of where we come from and old-school rock'n'roll. Much of this album was split between one of my signature series basses and an old flatwound-equipped Fender Mustang, which gave me a kind of old-style Hofner tone. To record that, I was running through one of my Fender Super Bassman amps."

Having been together for well over 30 years now, Green Day have a familiar way of working that seems just fine for singer and guitarist Billie Joe Armstrong, drummer Tre Cool and Dirnt. Even when they're not recording or touring, the guys are still working together. "Up until the *!Uno! !Dos! !Tre!* albums that we did in 2012, we would practise together four to six days a week between tours and records. It shocked me when you'd speak to other bands. I'd be genuinely surprised, like 'You mean you don't practise every day?'"

He continues: "After the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame induction in 2015, I realised that we've been practising four to six days a week for our whole fucking career! But we don't have to do that now. We know how to write together, and how to work on songs from different angles. Billie will send playlists of what he's listening to, because it comes from Billie's core as to what he's feeling. He'll work on songs and send us the early demos so we're all in the loop. When we're ready to lay down the proper demos, we get together and then



American, but not idiots (from left): Tre Cool, Billie Joe Armstrong, Dirnt

he can manipulate it from that point. Part of it is not overthinking it, because demos can sound really good these days. I've actually used stuff from my phone before. I've got a great collection of ideas, melodies, bass-line ideas, guitar riffs all on my phone – but you have to keep your ears open for new stuff too."

With so many miles on the clock together, do tensions ever run high? "Well, I've been playing with Billie since I was 10 and a half and I'm 47 now. The thing is, we're friends and we grew up a long time ago – so if shit gets difficult or awkward, we can have a general conversation. We're all different people, but there's a commonality with music. Billie has grown into a phenomenal songwriter but when we get together, he knows he can depend on Tre and I to get our parts down and lay it out for him. He's a good drummer too and sometimes he might suggest something – but he knows we'll play it differently and get all of the juice out of it."

As for studio craft, Dirnt points out that even when you think a song is finished, it isn't necessarily the case. "I don't like to over-listen to something – I like to keep the original inspiration, because you don't get a first listen again and again," he explains. I'll listen

"WE'VE BEEN PRACTISING FOUR TO SIX DAYS A WEEK OUR WHOLE CAREER!"

and take notes based on what I'm thinking, play it once or twice and then walk away to let the song evolve. When we get to the studio, I might write it out 18 different ways until I get it how I want it, but even then I might not know exactly which road we're going down with it until I actually lay it down.

"On 'Junkies On A High' for example, there's a section where the bass-line enhances the verses – but not so much that it takes away from the song. Then, on 'Meet Me On The Roof', that rhythm can be played so many different ways. I wrote it a few ways and recorded the whole thing, but when I got in there, I said 'You know what? The pocket is actually here', because I was feeling it differently. At the end, I just opened it up and walked it – turned around into a sort of jazz-walk! – and the guys said 'What the fuck was that?' But that was how I felt it."

Green Day have hit considerable highs throughout their career, to say the very least – most notably with the *Dookie* (1994) and *American Idiot* (2004) albums, where their progress was tangible – but it hasn't all been plain sailing, as Dirnt is quick to point out. "It's kinda weird," he muses, "because you don't know when you're going to write a seminal record that's going to change your career. Both of those albums were exciting, and we knew we were onto something new for us, taking us to a new level – but it's not the easy stuff that tests your mettle.

"After *Dookie*, we wanted to get right back into the studio, because we'd signed to a major label [Reprise/Warners], so everyone was freaking out, and we wanted to show that we weren't a one-trick pony. By the time we recorded *American Idiot*, we said 'We don't care what the world thinks. We're either going to swing from the heavens or we're going to strike out – and that's it. There's nothing in between'. That tour was immense. Those were truly epic shows for us. The *Bullet In A Bible* documentary was spot on, the sun came out and the planets aligned. That film documented our step up into the next league, playing major stadiums and festivals around the world. It was a pivotal moment for Green Day."

He continues: "The follow-up to *American Idiot* was probably the hardest writing and recording cycle of our careers – because we're just not built for mailing it in, and we could have done that. There was a lot of pressure, because there was nothing on the table ready to go. Our next album, *21st Century Breakdown* (2009), was the perfect continuation – and we put

“I WANTED TO PUT SOMETHING GREAT OUT TO LET PEOPLE KNOW WE’RE NOT DONE”

our heads down and went to work. After the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame induction, I wanted to channel our energy into putting something new and great out, to let people know – again – that we’re not done.”

Moving on to bass gear, Dirnt’s signature Fender Precisions have proved incredibly successful since their launch in 2004 – but they started life out of necessity rather than as a commercial enterprise. Dirnt’s intention was to prevent vintage instruments from being bastardised, as he explains. “One of the reasons I went for the Tele headstock was to stop people buying up the original Telecaster and Precision basses and ruining them, routing them out for a pickup they were never designed for. I remember the day I paid Fender to make one of these basses: they sent me several variations before they came to me around 2003 to do a signature model. Nothing happened for around a year, so I made one with my tech and one of our engineers.”

We love the pickup he uses, we tell him. “That’s a ’59 Custom Shop wrap – and it’s a great pickup,” he enthuses. “I love to give them to bassists who are much better than me and watch them go ‘Oh shit!’ What else is in the signal chain, Mike? He laughs as he tries to recall what’s behind him onstage. “I usually play four or five basses per show,” he says. “We have a lot of older songs tuned down to E♭, but with the newer stuff, for simplicity, I’ll play in regular E tuning. I have a little Fender Mustang for things like ‘Macy’s Day Parade’ and other songs that have a different tonal requirement. It’s a simple setup.”

Asked about the Fender Super Bassman amps which he uses, he tells us: “I love that amp, and I know Fender re-designed it around six years ago, as they were heading in the wrong direction. I wrote them a letter saying ‘I’d be happy to champion that amp, but here’s what it needs’ – so I sent them a bunch of my old amps for specification purposes. I wanted the DI from an old amp, and I wanted the bass and treble knobs to have the push/pull functions that they used to have and to restore the blend option, so I didn’t have to go through a pedal to distort. That way I could have my clean tone and a distorted tone running side by side, so when I hit the button, I wasn’t losing any of the signal from my cable.

“I’m still using Fender 45-105 strings, Ultimate Ears for my IEMs and standard yellow [0.73mm] Dunlop Tortex picks. I move my arm a lot, but my sound really comes from my wrist. I don’t actually hit the strings as hard as people think I do, because I’ve figured out how to get the same attack without going so far through the strings. I like to let the pick move between my thumb, finger and wrist.”

Needless to say, Dirnt has acquired some veritable bass gems on his travels. Prepare to drool, folks… “I’ve got some really great 60s Precision basses. My wife wanted to buy me a great bass, so she found a ’58 Olympic White model – it eats my friends alive that I take it out and play it live! A few years back, Darryl Jones sold me his ’64 Jazz – it’s sick; very nasty. I also have a ’62 Jazz in Olympic White with a magical neck on it. You play a note on that thing and it sounds like a sine wave, I’ve never heard that much attack. The lows are really low and the highs are almost bell-like. I give away more basses than I buy; I give a lot away to charities and schools.”

With Green Day’s ‘Hella Mega’ world tour starting in March and running through to November, Dirnt is going to be exceptionally busy – but that’s what he wants, right? With a chuckle, he says: “Anything is possible at this point, which is exciting for Green Day and for me. We can do whatever we want.”

Father Of All Motherfuckers is out now on Reprise. www.greenday.com.

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Scott Free

The Kyuss, Obsessed and Fireball Ministry bassist, award-winning soundtrack composer, studio owner and all-round icon has much to say and many ways to say it. Mike Brooks meets the great man

What got you started on bass, Scott?
When I was five, my parents gave me two records for Christmas – the *Sesame Street* album and *Revolver* by the Beatles. Man, there were some great songs on that *Sesame Street* record, and *Revolver* was mind-blowing. I played drums when I was five, because Ringo Starr was my idol. Everything about that album tripped me out. How did they make those sounds? 'Tomorrow Never Knows' was otherworldly – it still is. The melodies were normal but the harmonies were mystifying to me, and that really caught my interest – like, how did they know to sing that interval?

Has that influenced you as a musician?
Yes. In my solo recordings, I put in all sorts of harmony layers which sound pretty natural to me. I'm pretty lazy about doing it live, though. Fireball Ministry's albums have quite lush harmonies – and I feel guilty not jumping in there and taking part in that side of things. I get lazy about it because I just want to rock out. I don't want to wear earplugs, I want to play loud and just concentrate on playing.

How did you become a Warwick player?
I was at the NAMM Show in 2012 and bumped into the artist rep for the company I was with. We were out on the floor, and I asked him why he wasn't in the booth, and he said he'd quit. I'd stuck with them because I really appreciated everything that he'd done for me, so I figured that if he wasn't around any more, I might as well shop around for a new instrument that was really going to inspire me to play more – because I was getting kind of lazy.

NAMM's the right place to shop around.
Exactly. I went around to so many booths that day – one company who shall remain nameless were very stand-offish! – but when I got to the Warwick booth, everyone was very friendly. I saw the roster on the wall which contained a lot of my favourite players – Bootsy Collins, Lee Sklar, you name it, they were all there. The other thing that attracted me to Warwick is that I play very strangely. I play left-handed but the bass is strung right-handed, so I can't just walk into a store and try a bass. Not one! I noticed that Warwicks had Allen wrench screws on the nut, so I thought that maybe I could swap the nut and the bridge saddles around to suit what I needed. Hans-Peter Wilfer [Warwick owner] took my information and a short time after NAMM, I got a phone call from the artist rep. He sent a contract over and we got rolling. I've been an endorsee since 2012.

If only everything was that easy.
Ha ha! The energy that happened right after that was incredible. Within a week or two joining Warwick, I got the call from Dave Grohl to do the *Sound City* soundtrack. Because of the positive energy, everything changed at that moment. It led to me playing in more bands, recording more albums, and getting calls from other artists.

Were you ever tempted to restring a left-handed bass as you would expect it to be strung?
No, the damage had already been done by that point. I started playing drums left-handed and had a teacher who insisted I switch to a right-handed playing style. I tried that for a while, but it really screwed me up – I was leading fills with the wrong hand, hitting cymbals with the wrong hand and getting all crossed up, which really confused me. So I said I wouldn't do that with bass, as I had already started playing that way. I figure there are a lot of things that I can't do, like traditional popping and slapping, but maybe there are other things that I can do that a righty player might not stumble on.

Tell us about your signature model.
It's an eight-string Katana, strung 'righty' with the smaller octave strings strung on the bottom, all chrome, and it's a life-changer. In Fireball Ministry, I find myself plucking octaves to thicken the sound and this bass fills the sound out very well.

What other gear do you use?
I'm currently using Ampeg, although I have a whole slew of stuff at home. My main amp is a KT150 Bison head. The tone is incredible and it switches well between vintage and modern. It has a real clarity that punches through but still has the creamy overdrive of an SVT. I'm scared to take it out on the road! I have two old SVT heads that I love to death, a 1970 and a 1971. I've also got a couple of Hartke heads, a Kilo and an LH1000, as well as rackmounted SVT 4 and 5 heads that they don't make anymore. In the studio, I have artists coming in who want tracks re-amped. They ask, 'Can you put this through the Bison or the Sky Valley amp?' and I say 'Sure, just send me some cash'. It's such an easy thing to do, now!

Any effects?
I've been using Darkglass a lot recently, especially the Vintage Ultra, it's great. I did a NAMM event and they didn't have an SVT, but having that pedal gave me a juicy tone. It's been great in the studio too. I have a stock SVT tone and I've re-amped it using the pedal. I also use Dean Markley strings, I've been with them for nearly 30 years, mainly Blue Steels.

What keeps the phone ringing?
I have to thank being on Kyuss' *Welcome To Sky Valley* album in 1994. Everything

"WHEN I'M AWAY I DREAM OF BEING HOME, AND WHEN I'M HOME I DREAM OF PLAYING BIG GIGS"

today came from playing on that record, because it made the most impact. After Dave Grohl thought of me, having not done anything for 10 to 15 years, that really opened doors, – especially with the Grammy! And then I got a call from [sometime Ozzy Osbourne guitarist] Jake E. Lee. They sent me some tracks and there was a great bass track already on there – I didn't know how to improve it. The engineer said they wanted me to do what I do, in other words noodle all over it, so I did that and sent it to them. I recorded the most fucked-up bass, with an 8x10 cabinet blaring in front of me – lots of bending, long sustains and feedback – and I thought there was no way they would go for it, so I sent them a clean version too. But they used the dirty stuff! It all goes back to *Sky Valley* – I can't get away from it. The latest project is Louise Patricia Crane's solo album coming out in May. One of my tracks is with members of my favourite band, the Eden House, along with Jakko from King Crimson, and Ian Anderson from Jethro Tull! Louise trusted me beyond being the dumb rock guy, and I got some bass feedback counterpoint in there filtered through a talkbox, some vocal harmonies, as well as more traditional bass parts. It's definitely the highest level production I've been a part of – super stoked on this one!

The mighty Kyuss, circa 1995
Getty

Do you have basses for different sounds?
I have two other Warwicks – a Thumb with a lot of midrange growl, and the Katana, which has a beefier, low oomph to it. I use the Katana mainly for Fireball Ministry which is detuned and kind of doomy. I always use medium-gauge strings from 45 to 105, but tuned down to C♯ standard so the strings are pretty loose and squirrely and I can get huge bends. I tried thicker gauge strings for the low tunings, but it's too stiff to get those bends, and end up going dead too quickly.

Do you practise much?
I don't tend to practise at home, as my joints suffer a bit. I had an operation on my fretting hand and I don't have the flexibility that I used to. I should warm up, but I don't... I do everything wrong!

What inspires you these days?
I hardly listen to any music, which may seem strange, but I don't like getting other people's music in my head very often. I have a high enough level of internal stimuli – so if I'm out feeding the horses, I have stuff in my head, I have my phone with me and I can record ideas. I live out in the country on a 40-acre ranch with 13 horses, 10 dogs, chickens and all kinds of things. It's very peaceful, a simple life. I can go for weeks without leaving the house, and then I'll get dragged out for a fun band thing. When I'm away, I want to be home; and then when I'm home I dream of playing big gigs! It's worked out to be a pretty good balance.

Twitter: @Scott_Reeder

Two Up

With her new album, *02022020*, Ida Nielsen reveals a new composing direction

Words: Mike Brooks, Joel McIver **Photos:** Getty

Tell us about the new album, *02022020*.
It's not a typical bass album, but there's still a lot of bass on it. I compose different kinds of music all the time. I'm touring with my funk band right now, and that stuff is what people have come to expect. Funk is my thing, and I love it, but as we toured, some of my older stuff took different turns and I wanted to record reinvented versions of some of those tracks. I wanted to release something for February 2nd, 2020, because I thought it was such a cool date, but it was also because my next funk album was not gonna be ready. I wanted to do something completely different. There's no slapping on the album, which is funny, because people are always asking me why I slap so much, ha ha!

How did you record the bass this time?
Straight into the computer, along with all the other instruments except the drums, which we did in the studio. People are gonna be angry with me when they hear which interface I used for the bass, because I used the cheapest one you can get! I bought it back when I was with Prince, because we were travelling so much. I'm not big into tech, I just want it to work. I recorded the vocals with a USB microphone. It's a great time for affordable gear right now.

Did you use your signature Sandberg for this album?
Yes, because it's totally versatile. It will do everything I want it to do. It fits me really well.

You've had it a few years now. How have you refined it to suit you?
Being a signature model, I didn't want it to be the same as something that was already available. So I went to the workshop and tried out this bass with a hole in it, so I could try different pickup options, move them around and try different types. I think I found some pickups that sound just how I like them to, and we found the right position as well. That was super-fun, as you could move one pickup and make the other sound really good but then adding the other would make it sound not so good – so you have to find the right combination. The electronics are standard Sandberg, but I feel that bass has such a variety of possibilities and I like all of that variety. I like the honkiness of the bridge pickup and the old-school sound from the neck pickup.

How did the association with Sandberg come about?
That goes way back to the Frankfurt Musikmesse in 2009. I was doing some stuff with TC Electronic at that show, and one of my friends from TC introduced me to Holger. I tried a bass on their stand and it was like, 'Wow, what is going on here – I need this bass!' Before that, I had a Lakland and a Fender, but the way this one sounded, I just thought 'This is it!' Holger Sandberg gifted that bass to me – and this was before I was playing with Prince, which is why I'm very happy to work with Holger. Obviously once I started playing with Prince, everyone took an interest in the instruments I was playing – but the fact that I wasn't really known before that shows Holger had faith in me.

Do you make tonal adjustments throughout the show?
I almost always have it set flat, and then I pan across the pickups depending on the song I'm playing. For example, if I want a more nasal sound, I'll go to the back pickup rather than mess with the EQ, unless I need to.

You played with Prince for six years. How did you go about learning his back catalogue?
I thought I knew a lot of his songs, but we were just getting started. There was no quick route other than sitting down and learning the songs. When I started with

him it was 2010, and I was joining a band that was already there, so I had a month to catch up which added some pressure. That was a lot of work! But at a certain point, I got to a place where I was able to learn really fast and remember stuff clearly. In the beginning, I would write everything down and keep it – but then I amazed myself at how quickly I was able to learn, remember and recall quickly. It was training, just like everything else is training.

Prince used to modify songs on a daily basis, and changes happened very quickly. How did you deal with that?
It was always on the spot. There might be a whole new arrangement at soundcheck, and then that would be the version we would play that night. Some of it could be on the spot in the show; he would say 'Watch me' and direct stuff. When it worked, it was really cool. We did the craziest thing once – we were doing a live TV show in France, and he didn't tell us up front what we were going to play, so every song was called on the spot. That kept us on our toes. I am eternally grateful for the gift that was playing with him and for everything I have learned

Would you like another sidewoman role?
Whatever I do next, I will be comparing it to him, and that isn't good for them or me. Until I feel like I'm not comparing another artist to him, I won't push to be in that position.

"PRINCE KEPT US ON OUR TOES BY TELLING US WHAT SONGS TO PLAY ON THE SPOT"

What is the one big thing that will help you for the rest of your career?
There were so many things, and it's hard to pick just one thing, but I think the fact he gave 100 percent onstage night after night has had a huge impact on me. His presence added something special. I never played a gig where I had the feeling that he was trying to get it over with – never. Even a song like 'Purple Rain', he must have played it thousands of times, but it was always magic, always special. I wonder, 'What would he think? How would he do it?' – sometimes subconsciously. Prince always pushed us to be better and I now want to make sure that I'm the best I can be as a musician. It has been a journey for me to get here, to this place."

02022020 is out now. Info: www.idanielsenbass.com

Strictly For The Birds

Lloyd Wood of Welsh rockers Those Damn Crows talks starting bands and his love of the lower register

Being a bass player is all about having discipline and knowing your musical surroundings – yet at the same time, setting no rules for yourself. Here's an example: I began playing bass when I was 13. I'd originally started playing drums when I was in school, and formed a band with a few friends from my class. One day, our bass player put his bass down... I jumped off the kit, walked over to his bass, picked it up, and that was it. The rest was history! That was my first ever bass – a Legend Jazz copy which I still own.

Those Damn Crows started in Wales nearly six years ago. We started putting material together with the plan to cut a full-length album and entered the famous Monmouth recording studio, Rockfield, to record our debut *Murder And The Motive*. These days, we're signed to Earache Records and putting out our second album. As it stands, we are still gaining momentum and our plans are to play everywhere.

I play a Fender USA Precision Elite with an ash body, a Mexican 50s Reissue P, a Mexican hybrid of a Precision neck and a Jazz body with split pickups, and a Sire Marcus Miller V3 five-string. I use an Orange AD 200 B amp with an Orange OBC 8x10 cab and run a MXR EQ pedal, a Sansamp Bass Driver DI and a Darkglass B7K preamp. I'm endorsed by Orange amplifiers and Rotosound strings. I genuinely love the power and headroom I can get from using Orange amps; it's their stripped-back simplicity that I really like. Why complicate matters? If it's not broken then don't fix it. As for Rotosound, I find they give me just enough bite to allow me to create my tone. I love the way they feel.

It has only been since the recording of our second album, *Point Of No Return* – which opened my eyes to the importance of the lower register which you can play in – that I've played my five-string. It's one of the best moves I've made, as it allows you to remove any limits from your playing. World domination is the goal!

www.thosedamncrows.com

Charlie Says

Ask bassist Charlie Wooton 'Who is the world's best bassist?' and he has the best answer yet...

We're a band that enjoys each other's company. We like to hang out and do the same things, and one of those things is to give back. We've had talks about teaming up with organisations like Playing For Change and Blue Monday, who give back in a big way, to learn how to do the same.

The Charlie Wooton Project's current line-up is Daniel Groover on guitar, Keiko Komaki on keys, Jermal Watson on drums and our featured vocalist is Arséne DeLay. CWP has had some of the greatest musicians grace the stage with us, from Oliver Wood to Sonny Emory to Zac Brown. Across the board, the list is long and impressive.

I'm very fortunate to work with Hartke, DR Strings, Mad Professor Amps and DeLaney Guitars, along with some help from Mu-Tron and Reunion Blues Guitar Bags. I mainly play five-string basses, although my fretless is a four. I like the five for a number of reasons. The low B gives me freedoms I don't have with the four. I like playing chords and melodies, so it's easier to play low notes with the high ones. Mike Delaney is making a signature Charlie Wooton bass that will be a four-string for me but also available as a five.

I remember how I got started on bass. I was playing trumpet at the time, and my four older brothers played everything but the bass. When I was 14, my foster brother Jude left a bass at the house and I fell in love with the instrument. I remember hitting an open string – not even plugged in – and was immediately calm. The bass Jude left me was an Ibanez Blazer Series that said 'Custom Made' on the headstock. I'm guessing it was made in 1970-something. It's a beautiful piece of wood. After reading about Jaco I decided to rip the frets out, and it turned out better than I could have ever dreamed.

The secret of playing bass well is preparation, which turns into relaxation, which turns into selfless confidence. I like playing all kinds of techniques – slapping is a favourite. There's a lot of impressive

> "PREPARATION TURNS TO RELAXATION WHICH TURNS INTO SELFLESS CONFIDENCE"

tricks these days but I like slapping a pocket that just wears you out.

The greatest bass player that ever lived is sitting in their mom's living room, saying 'I'm gonna make it one day...' So many bassists have shown me wonderful things in so many different ways. I think it's best when you can find the greatest bassist in anyone giving it their all. In the words of George Porter Jr., when asked how he played so laid-back: "Just wait a little longer before you hit the note."

CWP's new album *Blue Basso* is out now on Wild Heart Records. www.charliewooton.com

Songs For A Taylor

Taylor Lee explains why playing bass is like pumping iron. Drop and give us 20!

I've really enjoyed being the bassist for Nico and Vinz over the past couple years – especially a recent show we did in Antigua for Save The Ocean. When you're holding down the bass-line, it's wild hearing 20,000 people singing along! I'm looking forward to touring with them when they come to the States. I'm also in Prime, my band consisting of myself, Ryan Saranich on sax, Michael D'Angelo on drums and Mike Seal on guitar. It's a new and original project that I'm excited about; I have plans for us to tour in 2020.

I played my first bass around the age of 12 – I remember being immediately hooked. It felt natural to me from the beginning. My first bass was an Ibanez starter instrument that came with a small 15-watt amp. I spent the first year practising, locked in my room until I could play every note of Jaco Pastorius' debut album. My dad would have to remind me to come eat.

> "I LOCKED MYSELF IN MY ROOM UNTIL I COULD PLAY JACO'S DEBUT"

Nowadays, I endorse Fodera basses and DR strings; I also use Epifani amps. I've been playing Foderas for the last six years and to me, they make it easy to play everything you hear. I'm currently playing a five-string custom bass that was designed to be a close tonal replica of Matthew Garrison's bass in the Monarch body style. It's a 33" scale and is ridiculously comfortable to play. It's a chameleon because it has a great low end and clarity. I primarily tune E to C. I also play six-string because it's useful to have that extended lower range.

Learning to play bass is like going to the gym. When you're trying to lift more weight, you have to build up to it and gradually increase the weight. With bass it's the same thing; at first, take it slow with major scales and minor scales. Once you're comfortable with technique, you can move on to more challenging exercises.

I'm heavily influenced by Jaco Pastorius in his approach to playing bass as a lead instrument that never lacks in rhythm supportiveness. I love to use the element of surprise in the tenacious way that he used it. It seemed like everything he did was fresh and new. In addition, Anthony Jackson's tone on Chaka Khan's records is the pinnacle, and Pino Palladino on D'Angelo's *Voodoo* has been a huge influence on my sound. Both of those players found ways to support the music while adding the right amount of flavour.

My new album *Lightning Man* is out now; it features Bela Fleck, Steve Bailey, Matthew Garrison, and Oteil Burbridge. All of the tunes are my original compositions, and the whole album is an offering to God for all the blessings He has given me with my wife Sara and my sons, Noah and Gabriel. I believe listening is the most underrated aspect of music. The ability to have a conversation with everyone on stage and support each other musically is the real deal. Just listen to drummer Elvin Jones and bassist Jimmy Garrison on John Coltrane's 'Selflessness'; it's as if they were reading each other's minds and every note had a pure intention. That's what I'm striving for.

www.facebook.com/taylorleebass

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16446 - Gallien Krueger MB150S/112 Bass

Mark bass

9004 - Markbass 121 Lite Alain Caron Combo
6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P Bass Combo
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin (300W)
5429 - Mark Bass Covers For Mark Bass Amps
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (300W, 1x12)
19641 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P, 300W, Used
5475 - Mark Bass CMD121H (300W, 1x12)
18371 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD101 Micro60
18372 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD 102 250
18370 - Markbass Marcus Miller CMD 102 500
9940 - Markbass Mini CMD 151 Jeff Berlin
16764 - Markbass 102 250 Richard Bona Combo
19729 - Markbass Ninja 102-500 Bass Combo
9938 - MicroMark 801 Bass Combo

ORANGE

15715 - Orange Crush Bass 100 Bass Combo
15716 - Orange Crush Bass 25 Bass Combo
15714 - Orange Crush Bass 50 Bass Combo
19512 - Orange Crush Bass 50 Used
15111 - Orange OB1 300 Combo

Roland

4435 - Roland Cube 20XL BASS (20W, 1x8)
18035 - Roland Cube CB60XL Bass Amp
5678 - Roland Microcube Bass RX, (5W, 4x4)

Electric & Silent Basses

4910 - Bridge Cetus Electric Double Bass
5110 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
14482 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass, Blk
16847 - NS Design NXTA Upright Bass, Active
14014 - Yamaha SLB100 Silent Upright Bass
6360 - Yamaha SLB200 Silent Double Bass

Bass Heads

14618 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Amp Head
6760 - Ashdown ABM500 EVO II 575W, Used
18848 - Bergantino BiAmp
18854 - Bergantino Custom Padded Carry Bag
18850 - Bergantino Forte Bass Amplifier
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
16044 - Eich T1000 Bass Amp
16043 - Eich T300 Bass Amp
16027 - Eich T500 Bass Amp
16026 - Eich T900 Bass Amp

GK GALLIEN-KRUEGER

19468 - GALLIEN KRUEGER LEGACY 500 Head
16318 - Gallien Krueger MB500 Bass Amp Head
16319 - Gallien Krueger MB800 Fusion Bass Amp H
17147 - Gallien Krueger MB800 Bass Head
15588 - Hartke TX600 Bass Amplifier
14828 - Mark Bass Nano Mark 300 Bass Amp Head
10408 - MarkBass Bass MultiAmp Stereo
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head 500w
19081 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head USED
9035 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
5244 - MarkBass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
9256 - Markbass Big Bang 500W Bass Head
19484 - Markbass Evo 1 Bass Amp Head
17254 - Markbass Little Marcus 1000 Bass Amp
17252 - Markbass Little Marcus 250 Bass Amp Head
17009 - Markbass Little Marcus 500 Bass Amp Head
17010 - Markbass Little Marcus 800 Bass Amp Head
9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
15271 - Markbass Little Mark Ninja Bona Head
19282 - Markbass Little Mark Vintage Bass Amp Head
9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
15151 - Markbass Randy Jackson TTE501 Bass Head
15110 - Orange 4 Stroke 500 Bass Amp
6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head
19674 - Orange Little Bass Thing Bass Amp Head
5351 - Orange Terror Bass 500 TB500
16531 - Trace Elliot Elf 200 Watt Bass Amp Head

5 String Basses

19147 - Cort A5 Plus SCMS Open Pore Natural
14312 - Cort Action V-DLX, Cherry Red Sunburst
13803 - Cort B5 5 String, Tobacco Sunburst, Used
16526 - Cort GB75 5 String Bass, Black
10213 - Cort GB75WBL 5 String Bass, White Blonde
18731 - Cort GB75JJ 5 String Bass Aqua Blue
16397 - Cort GB75JJ Amber Glossy 5 String Bass
15844 - Fender 5-String Jazz Bass, Blue, Used
17038 - G&L Tribute L2500 5-String, Natural Used
16766 - Ibanez SR30TH5PII Premium, 5-String Bass
18254 - MTD Saratoga Deluxe, 3 Tone Sunburst
19381 - Marleaux MBass 5 String Bass, Burl Top
19727 - Music Man StingRay 5 Special Burnt Apple
14608 - Overwater Progress Deluxe, Pre-Owned
5121 - Rockbass Streamer LX5, Black

Spector

11196 - Spector Bass Legend 5 Classic Blk Cherry
19735 - Spector Bass Rebop 5DLX Blck Cherry
16329 - Spector Coda 5 Pro Black Cherry Stain
16773 - Spector Coda 5 Pro Trans Black
12406 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Amber
13214 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Black
11195 - Spector SP5BK Performer 5 in Black
16776 - Spector SP5BK Performer 5, Black Cherry
19158 - Sterling by MusicMan SubRay 5 Bass, HBS
8999 - Yamaha RBX5A2 5 String Bass, Black
13193 - Yamaha TRB1005J Bass, Black
16000 - Yamaha TRBX505 Bass
17879 - Yamaha TRBX605FM 5 String Dark Red Burst

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FIRST BASS

A brand-new feature devoted to new, new-ish, promising or just cool bass players you need to watch out for...

LYXX ROSE

SYRYN

Lens Flair Photos

What was your way into bass?
The first bass-line that really tickled my ear was Bachman Turner Overdrive's 'Not Fragile'. I asked my dad what in the world was making that sound, and he said 'It's only the legendary bass guitar'. I thought, 'I have to have one'. At age 11, my dad had grabbed me a Hartke starter gig pack, coupled with the B150 combo. I still have the bass, but the amp is long gone!

What bass gear do you currently use?
I play ESP LTD basses – only four-strings. I've played five-string a few times in the past, but that was only if a band or song required it. For originals, I'm four-string all the way. I also truly can't get over how crisp and comfortable Gibson Thunderbirds are. I use a Little Big Muff Fuzz pedal and a Traynor YBA 200-2 head with a TC210 cab.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
Performance-wise, if you find yourself cramping easily when trying to get through a riff, just turn up a touch and tread lightly. You don't have to hammer the strings – a light touch is enough, and you'll play faster. It should feel like dragging your fingertips through a calm stream, not rapids. Also, remember that if you want to be heard, you're already in the wrong – the bass must be felt first.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
Chris Squire.

Where can we hear you play?
I play in a Canadian five-piece metal group called Syryn. We've just released our debut album, *Beyond The Depths*, and it's available on all platforms. We will be hitting up as many cities in Alberta as possible to promote the album. We will also be involved in a couple of Canadian festivals in the summer. See you there!

www.syrynmetal.wixsite.com/syrynofficial

SCOTT RIXON

HIGH PULP

imberly Rixon

What was your way into bass?
When I was 13 years old, my parents gave me an ultimatum: stop playing so many video games and pick a sport or an instrument to play. I wasn't keen on sports, so I chose the instrument that I thought would be easiest – bass.

What bass gear do you currently use?
I play a custom-built P/J with a Seymour Duncan custom P pickup and a Nordstrand Fat Stack 5; a fretless custom P/J with a Seymour Duncan custom set; and a Warwick Streamer Stage II with Seymour Duncan Basslines. I use a Line 6 HX effects unit and Markbass heads and cabs. I built the two custom basses; I worked with a few local manufacturers to create the bodies and necks and get them finished to my preferred specifications. From there, I grabbed all of the hardware and electronics, built the basses, and worked with High Pulp guitarist Gehrig Uhles to do the final setup. It makes it easy to build your own gear when you've got a luthier in the band!

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
Always serve the song. It takes a lot of work to balance serving the song with leaving it all on the stage or track, and the best players do that work.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
Probably Victor Wooten, although Thundercat is currently pressing to take the title.

Where can we hear you play?
High Pulp focuses on creating and performing music inspired by a mixture of jazz, funk, hip-hop, fusion, and a variety of other genres. We are currently touring on our debut album *Bad Juice*, and our second album *Moon Milk* is slated for release in 2020. We're getting ready to release two more singles off a collaborative EP, *Light Fix*, and we're also working on a covers video release project that will feature Pulp-ified renditions of several tunes and art created by local artists.

www.highpulpmusic.com

TOMASO

SEMITONAL

What was your way into bass?
As a child, I was watching TV when the image of a double bassist appeared on the screen: a close-up of face and hands, accompanied by a wildly intense bass performance. I was transfixed, and the impact stayed with me. It turned out to be the Charles Mingus documentary *Triumph Of The Underdog*. From that moment onwards, I always wanted to play bass. Aged 12, I managed to sneak backstage after a Thin Lizzy show and was lucky enough to meet Phil Lynott, who took the time to sit me down and encourage me to go for it. Soon after, I borrowed a friend's Fender Musicmaster, started playing in local punk bands and the deal was sealed. My first bass was an Aria TSB.

What bass gear do you currently use?
Music Man Stingrays with LaBella strings; EHX, Darkglass, Source Audio, Boss and MXR effects; and a Genz Benz ShuttleMax 9.2 head with Eden D210 XST cabs. I've played five-string bass exclusively for 20 years. The Bass Centre's Nick Owen helped me find my first Stingray and I never looked back.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
Keep listening. Seek out the spaces in the music, and let these guide the groove you create with the drums. Use fills and slides to accentuate other elements, such as vocal lines. Find unusual points to hang your line on, rather than always starting on the one. Experimenting with note lengths can create different effects: I've been focusing on this for some time.

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
The greatest bass player who ever lived is widely considered to be James Jamerson, and that's difficult to argue with. For me, Tony Levin is definitely up there, though: not only for his command of electric, upright and Chapman Stick, but also for the imagination and passion which runs through his playing.

Where can we hear you play?
My current project, Semitonal, is bass-driven and uses loops, triggers and a live rhythm section to create hypnotic instrumental music with attitude. The bass is very much in charge, defining changes and shifting against layers of melody. I write all the parts myself, then work with a drummer to bring the beats to life. Two EPs have been recorded at Doghouse Studios in Glasgow.

www.semitonal.com

CAM SINCLAIR

SESSIONS AND STAGE

What was your way into bass?
I was a drummer first, playing in an all-girl punk band, the Sweaty Little Nixons, based out of San Francisco. A dear friend entrusted his 1966 Fender P-Bass to me one day. That was it. I laugh because it happened so fast. I went to many open mics, jams and gigs where I was invited to play a few numbers, met other players, which in turn took me on the road to several projects, gigs, festivals, different musical groups and genres. Punk, funk, country, blues, rock, covers – all the while learning new songs, developing new skills, taking cues from other players on stage. I recorded with East Bay Ray of the Dead Kennedys on guitar, gigged with Sam Andrews and Dave Getz of Big Brother & The Holding Company every week outside a San Rafael pizza parlour. I started my own project, Purple Flowers, and spent six years in Jokers Asylum, a heavy metal trio, performing throughout the greater Los Angeles area and beyond. I studied briefly with Carol Kaye. She told me I reminded her of her back in the day. I love Carol as a person and bass player. She tells it like it is!

What bass gear do you currently use?
I use a G&L, a Fender P-Bass '57 Reissue with a Boss OC-2, delay and overdrive, and a Zoom B3 effects unit, with Ampeg, Gallien-Krueger and Eden amps and cabs. I love my 1990s G&L four-string with flatwounds, it delivers a punchy bottom end sound that cuts through the mix and records well. It's my go-to bass. I'm a fan of drop-D tuning and have been since the beginning of bass playing.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
1. Be a good listener
2. Be able to naturally keep time
3. Lay down the foundation for the melody
4. Lock in with the drummer
5. Feel it and don't think too much
6. Know the fret notes on the neck
7. Know where the note goes and how to extend the chord

Who is, or was, the greatest bass player ever?
Oh boy, hmm, well there's Cliff Burton, whose bass-lines were so unique and driving, practically nobody can copy them. And of course Jaco Pastorius, John Paul Jones, Geddy Lee, Bootsy Collins, Mike Watt, James Jamerson, Larry Graham and Carol Kaye!

Where can we hear you play?
I've been in the studio doing session work, laying down bass, assisting in the arrangement and recordings of songs by Borderline Delusion and others. I'm also on-call as a bassist at last-minute gigs and fill-ins. I play at the First Church of Christ on Sundays in San Fernando, California, and also in the band Goldilocks. In 2020 I plan to take my playing to the next level – keep watch!

www.camonbass.com

The New Reality

Code Orange bassist Joe Goldman reveals one of the most intimidating tones ever conceived. Hywel Davies runs for cover

If your brain didn't suffer concussion from the sheer onslaught that is Code Orange's third album *Forever* back in 2017, now may be a good time to rectify that issue – as the new album, *Underneath*, continues the Pittsburgh natives' mission. Bassist Joe Goldman gives it to us straight about how a group of creative arts students became hardcore's fiercest champions.

"When we were writing up this shit and recording it, I knew we were on to some good stuff," states the bassist. "We've always put in real effort to put something out there that didn't exist prior to us; something that no-one has done before. We're always thinking at the back of our heads, 'Man, people are going to hear this and they're not going to know what to make of it. It's going to blow some heads off!'"

Few of us have lifelong relationships with our instruments, but Goldman and his Backstage four-string might be the exception. When we ask if he remembers his first bass, he doesn't have to recall a thing – as he still uses the very same one, unsurprising given the band's unwavering DIY aesthetic.

"Man, I still play it; I play it every day. My dad got it for me when I was in seventh grade and it was this hot pink Fender reissue bass. Everybody would be laughing at me because it was just this weird-looking thing. I eventually got another one, but I held on to it for sentimental value. Then me and my good friend Jason Cook modded it out at his shop, Backstage Guitars, back in Pittsburgh.

"It had a nice body and nice pickups and I liked the feel of it, but we were like, 'Let's make this thing into a weapon!' We put a graphite black neck on it and dressed it in car paint. The pickguard is actually brass that we just dyed black, literally just a sheet of metal. I've punched it before and messed my hand up really bad!"

Goldman's bass tone was sculpted with the help of Converge guitarist Kurt Ballou – how does a human being come up with a sound like that? He explains: "When I joined Code Orange in 2014, back when the band was called Code Orange Kids, I inherited some nasty-ass bass shit, like this $25 guitar pedal. Literally it was just some knock-off brand – a piece of crap. But it made a gnarly 'chhhh!' sound, like a saw or a rusted chisel – I just loved it! I use that on all the Code Orange stuff and was the real kick to my sound.

"When I started playing in punk bands when I was a kid, I learned from just watching my friends," he adds. "I mean it, I just picked the thing up and played it. I still don't really have any bass chops, so we worked hard on trying to find a good sound. I feel like in a lot of hardcore and metal stuff the bass is always too far back, but I think I learned that it can be more than that, it doesn't have to just sit there. It has a force – you just have to think about it a little more. It's an art, and art is always about being brutally honest and not being ashamed of who you are. It encourages me to keep pushing and to keep shattering feelings to make fine art."

Underneath is out now on Roadrunner.
www.codeorangetoth.com

Lee Sklar

Adam Nolly Getgood

Rob Van Der Loo

Jacob Umansky

Kyle Konkiel

Ayumu

Lu Salinas

Chris Sorenson

Otto Schimmelpennick

Lauri Silvonen

Nathan Navarro

Lisa Dodd

Christian Sturgess

Henny Vrienten

Felipe Gomez

Matthew McGuire

Hank Insell

Sion

Dann Glenn

Patrick Laplan

Anthony Werner

Rob Saireh

Glen Mollen

Tomoya Tachikawa

John

Michael Spencer

Ryan Oxford

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Pedro Vera

Jase Sng

Chris Van Der Walt

Earl Pereira

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GUITARGUITAR Glasgow Guitar Shop
www.guitarguitar.co.uk

www.dingwallguitars.com

Viking Quest

Lydia Martel brings the heaviness to an Amon Amarth tribute band, Warriors Of The North. Horns up!

I started playing bass when I was about seven or eight years old, on an electric guitar that my father would give to me some years later. It was a Vantage Quest Atak 6 MK-II and I played on it with my fingers. When my father saw me play this way, I remember that he said 'Hey, you're playing like a bass player, it's not a bass, it's a guitar!' I didn't know that it was the bass technique. I started playing a real bass when I bought my first one at the age of 16. It was an Austin in natural wood finish, that I bought on sale in a small music store in Quebec City.

Our band was formed in 2014 when our lead guitarist and founding member was tired of playing Amon Amarth by himself. I joined in 2016 and quit the cover band that I was in to put all my available practice time into learning Amon Amarth songs and developing my technique – they have so many albums to learn. All the members are fans of Amon Amarth, and we have so much fun playing together.

The three basses that I use are an Ibanez SR 2605-CBB Premium five-string, an Ibanez Workshop SRFF 806 six-string with fanned frets and an Ibanez BTB 1405 VNF Premium five, which my luthier converted into a fretless. For effects, I use an MXR M85 distortion, an MXR M109 graphic EQ, a TC Electronic Forcefield compressor, a DigiTech Whammy DT Drop Tune pedal and a Decimator II G-String Noise Reduction pedal. My amps are a Markbass STD 104HR 4x10 cab driven by an Ampeg BA-210 V2 2x10. I know it's a weird setup, but the combined sound is awesome.

I play most of the time with five-strings and sometimes with sixes. I love playing metal, and the loudness and intensity of the five- and six-string bass can't be obtained on a four-string. It's more adapted to this kind of music, has more versatility and in my opinion, it's more fun to play too. I don't play slap bass myself. I like to watch other bassists do it, but personally I prefer using my right-hand fingers to lovingly tickle the strings very, very fast.

I've learned that playing songs that you love helps a lot with your playing. The most important thing is to be able to keep the tempo, keep the groove, be relaxed and have fun. Steve Harris is a legend for me for these reasons. Not only because he is good, but also because he developed his own technique. He's an inspiring, natural guy who gives great shows and is a genius.

Some of my bandmates and I in Warriors of the North are currently working on an original folk-metal project that will integrate various folk instruments such as tin whistle and nyckelharpa. Remember, the bass is to the bassist what Mjölnir is to Thor, but with a bigger handle!

www.facebook.com/WarriorsoftheNorth

Finnish Lines

Solo bassist Kristiine Silinja reminds us that there's no such thing as 'you cannot'...

I'm a solo artist, currently residing in Helsinki, Finland, originally from Tallinn, Estonia. I started my bass journey in my late teens in a local cover band focusing on progressive metal – a tough start for a beginner! I tried several metal and cover projects, but I always yearned to do something different – to deviate, create something of my own and find my place. I've finally come to the point where I know I am a melodic bass player, a soloist, and that I can arrange everything on basses.

As a kid, I was told that I was musically deaf with absolutely no potential whatsoever, so I grew up with no musical instruments – but music was always part of my life. I grew tired of hearing 'you cannot', and wanted to overcome that by trying to believe in myself – not an easy task, I must say. At first, I played an acoustic guitar, but our relationship simply didn't work out. We were not meant for each other. I started to think that I really was hopeless, as everyone said, until one day I was invited to see a local band rehearse, and the boy I fancied at that time played a very peculiar instrument. That instrument, the bass, spoke to me and never left my mind. I knew I had to try it. The boy is long forgotten. My true date was bass!

The very first bass I bought was a Yamaha RBX260 with Rotosound strings. It was light, blue and I loved it. Nowadays, I play a Marleaux Consat six-string. I also have a four-string Marleaux Soprano and a five-string Consat. My six-string is my main bass and my muse; it is the most suitable bass for me. I love exploration, adventures, and freedom. All that comes perfectly with a six-string.

As I am a melodic bassist, having a greater range and more options is simply a must. I can play grooves and rhythmic parts in a low range, I can improvise solos in mid and high ranges, and let melodies flow on top of any of those. It's more physically challenging, but the challenge has always attracted me. I have small hands, but I feel comfortable playing the Consat six-string. The bass sings – I'm lucky to have found it! My Marleaux basses have Delano humbuckers, and I use Curt Mangan strings and an Ebow.

Two bassists that made my heart stop are Michael Manring and Zander Zon. I had the honour of meeting Michael, he's so inspiring. I also admire Geddy Lee, Les Claypool, Tony Levin and Andre Mueller.

Recently, I've been working on writing my own compositions, and this year I will be releasing an EP and an album. After that, I'm looking forward to working on collaborative projects, as well as recording covers of my favourite video game and movie soundtracks.

My advice? Bond with the instrument, believe in yourself, and enjoy every note and moment you play. Do what feels most right, play what makes your soul rejoice, and don't let anyone bring you down. Treasure the people who support you, embrace different points of view, and don't focus on any negativity. Let it be about the bass, music, passion, and fun. Enjoy every single note and moment.

www.instagram.com/ksi_kris

Read And Learn

Most successful bassists learn to read music and then build a career, but not the esteemed Michael Mondesir. He's played with a huge list of musicians, from Jeff Beck to Ginger Baker, Neneh Cherry and Bill Bruford. All bassists should read this!

Interview: Joel McIver **Photos:** Getty

What does a day in your life at the moment look like, Michael?
Well, currently the thing seems to be playing in West End theatres, covering for the principal players. I'm not a chair holder, as it were. I just come in and dep for some lovely people. I finished a decade of fairly heavy touring last year. It began with the *Thriller Live* tour in 2009, and it was travelling around Europe, but then it spread to places like China and Israel and Egypt. That was very last-minute – I had the call two nights previously. I said to them that I couldn't read music, but I could learn, and if they sent the audio, then I'd be all right in a couple of nights.

You never learned to read music as a kid?
I came up just learning in my room, just hearing records, and going to concerts and looking at the hands of players. I remembered what they played, and then headed home and played the things at home, even though I didn't have a bass. I'd just mime the hand movements.

Visualising it rather than actually doing it?
Entirely, yes. I did that for probably two years before I even actually touched a bass. By the time I actually held one, it was like 'Oh, I was right'. My family had no money, and when you've got no money, you get resourceful and find another way. I don't think it's super-unusual. It might be unusual to take it to a particular level, if you like, but even so, there are plenty of players that I know who came at it in that kind of way.

So why did you decide to learn to read in 2009, when you were already a sought-after bassist?
I was at a point where I'd had enough of not reading music, and I thought, 'This is an opportunity to try to cure that problem'. I was really annoyed about the fact that I couldn't actually look at a piece of paper and go, 'This is where this happens'. I'd seen people do that for years and years.

Not being able to read had obviously not hindered your career before that point.
A lot of players who were aware of me in the early to mid-1980s, and who knew the kind of things that I was playing, were surprised that I could hear things and learn them quickly, and more importantly, remember them. That's my superpower, I suppose.

Your brother Mark is an acclaimed drummer. Was he already a drummer by the time you picked up the bass?
Yes, although he and I started drumming at the same time, on the same day, at different schools, because he was in the first year of secondary school and I was in the last year of primary. We came home and said, 'You'll never guess what I did today'. We'd both picked up the drums. These two schools were not highly funded, let's say. His school had a bass drum, a snare drum, and a ride, but no pedals, so he was playing both kick and snare with the stick in his left hand.

And was it the same for you?
At my school, I had a ride, snare, and hi-hat. The next year, I got to secondary school and they acquired a hi-hat, so I taught Mark how to use that. That's my big boast. The thing with Mark is that the second that he touched the kit, it was completely obvious that he was a genius on it. It was ridiculously obvious to everybody. I could also play, but my concept of things to play was not supported by everybody. Some people liked it, but the thing I realise now is that I was naturally playing in odd time signatures, although I had no clue what I was doing back then. I would play in 4/4, but it would have things looping within it, and people would be quite confused by it all.

Rather than defaulting to four, you went to unusual times?
Yes. Mark did that as well. Both of us were visual artists when we were really young. I did the whole art college thing from 13 to 15, because the art teacher at my school couldn't really help me. They packed me off to the Camberwell School of Arts & Crafts, and I did that in the evenings and at weekends.

That's advanced stuff for a kid.
Both of us, plus our big sister, were unusually gifted at a young age, as it were. Also, both of us could make things out of wood. I don't know how we knew how to do it, but we just did it. From around five years old, I was fixing TVs and radios, although to this day I still don't know anything about electronics. People are always asking me about amps, and I don't know anything about them, but somehow I can see the things that are not quite right and fix them.

Why take a break from touring after so long on the road?
I love travelling, but I was finding that

because I was away a lot, that my presence here in London is nothing. Nowadays, there are players who I've not even heard of who have been around for 10 years. I had quite literally never heard of them, much less actually heard them. So, now I'm consciously trying to hang out a bit more and post some things online, because I realise that's how things are at the moment. Your presence is online or nothing. I don't think that's a bad thing, but I wasn't particularly concentrating on it before as I was travelling 200 nights a year.

Was that exhausting?
For me, it wasn't, although it was tough in terms of wanting to be around my children more. I suppose 200 nights a year was the peak of it: the average over the 10 years was probably more like 90 to 120 dates a year travelling – so I was around my children, but I could have been around them a lot more.

You also play with Billy Cobham.
That has been fantastic. Billy's old songs are great, and he loves them, but his writing has morphed so much. The bass parts are more like classical lines these days. There's a lot of notes, but they're quite interesting intervals, so it's not just a question of playing something quickly. There's really a lot in it. He has a lot of projects, and I play in maybe five of them. He's such a high-intensity creative artist at 75 years old, although he doesn't look it or play like it.

You write your own stuff as well, correct?
Yes, I do, but I'm not in a big rush. I'm slowly putting out some stuff. I've been posting some clips of me playing to recordings that I was on 20 or 30 years ago, just to put those things back out there, because a lot of people haven't heard them. They're good things, but they were not necessarily smash hit albums.

You also teach at the Royal Academy Of Music – a prestigious gig, to say the least.
Oh, yeah, visiting faculty for the last 20 years. As I explained to you, 10 years ago, I didn't read a note of music, so I couldn't really explain to anyone how I was hearing harmony, and the names of the chords and all that. I didn't really know any of that, but I could produce the results. At the Academy I was bringing in recordings and having the students learn them without writing the things out, because in that universe, writing out and reading is really easy. I did that because I'd found that a lot of the students, as fantastic as they are, hadn't learned ear training correctly.

"I HAVEN'T OWNED A HIGH-END BASS IN 36 YEARS OF PLAYING PROFESSIONALLY"

What is correct ear training, as you see it?
It's somebody handing you an album on Tuesday, and by Thursday you're supposed to completely know the album inside out, because there might not be a set list when you play it live. They might actually give you five or six albums to learn over a longer period – that quite often happens to me. That built my reputation, because I was able to come in and play some pretty complex things with the artist. I had to cover on a couple of Trilok Gurtu's tours when [Gurtu's regular bassist] the great Chris Minh Doky was not around. It was like, 'Are you around in a couple of days?' and they'd courier over a pile of albums. Trilok told me, 'I don't really have set lists, I just call the tunes', so I had to learn all of the stuff. That was my calling card. People heard that I could pick things up quickly.

Let's talk gear.
I use Elixir strings, and I've played Yamaha basses since 1994. I have a '94 BBN5 II. I love Yamaha; I have the prototype of the TRBX series. Mine are Japanese-made. So I have a load of Yamahas, and from years back I have an Ibanez Roadstar II. It's extremely reliable. I did loads of albums with it. I'd go into the studio and people would have a look and go, 'Where's your P-Bass, mate?' and be laughing a bit – and then after the recording they'd be like, 'How much do you want for that bass?'

Nowadays you can spend a reasonably small amount and still get a playable instrument.
I've played a lot of basses – extremely low-priced ones, extremely high-priced ones – but I haven't played an instrument that sounds significantly better than my BBN5 II. I'm not slagging people off who play or build these high-end things, just that in 36 years of playing professionally, I haven't really owned a high-end bass. Nobody has said to my face, 'You've lost work because you don't have a vintage Jazz'.

www.michaelmondesirbass.com

David with Headcat's Danny Harvey

Suzanne Penley

Morbid Tales

David Vincent – the man behind the bass and/or vocals in Vltimas, I Am Morbid and solo projects – has spent his career among the low frequencies. Here he explains how it all came to pass...

When I was a teenager in the 70s, radio was much more diverse than it is today. What was considered pop music might be Carl Douglas's 'Kung Fu Fighting' or Black Sabbath's 'Paranoid', and rock'n'roll radio had a much broader palette than it does today, when everything is so very calculated. The DJs would be actual disc jockeys who would play records. Musically speaking, bands such as KISS, Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple and the like cemented the foundations of hard rock, whose offspring would ultimately evolve into metal. It was a great time, culturally speaking.

My voice went low at a really early age, maybe even when I was seven or eight. My parents used to listen to a group called the Kingston Trio, who played a folksy, calypso style of music, with three singers who would do almost a barbershop trio. They'd sing low and high, similar to a gospel style. I would memorise all the parts, but I always liked the bass parts best. It was comfortable and natural for me, because I heard bass.

When you listened to Black Sabbath, or Alice Cooper's original band, or Grand Funk Railroad, with the way those records were mixed in the 70s, you really heard the bass. It was sometimes the loudest thing on the record. It just sounded really good to me. It was a very organic thing, and ultimately I feel at home with bass because it's part of the resonance of my being.

Back then, the charts were full of punk rock, which I liked, and disco music, which I didn't. I liked a little bit of funk – the Ohio Players was a band that I enjoyed, with good bass and interesting beats. Blues used to be so good, but we've lost a lot of the greats. B.B. King was a tremendous, soulful, spiritual player. I don't know what happened to high-quality soul music, although I do like R&B singers like Erykah Badu, who has a very passionate, instinctual voice. The Blues Brothers movie got me into a lot of this music.

In punk rock, I liked the Misfits and the hardcore DC stuff. I loved Black Flag and Minor Threat and Iron Cross. I liked the energy. It wasn't so much about the musicianship per se but about the attitude. It seemed that all of the so-called great musicians didn't have that energy. I was always trying to find something that I didn't know. I've tried to get metal people to understand the energy of punk, but usually they'd say that it just sounded like a bunch of noise.

> "I'VE TRIED TO GET METAL PEOPLE INTO PUNK BUT THEY SAY IT JUST SOUNDS LIKE NOISE"

David pictured in 2008, playing in Morbid Angel with his signature Dean Demonator in full effect

Soon I started learning to play music myself. I started on upright bass in the school orchestra in third grade, when I was nine years old. I liked it because you could get out of class to do the music lessons, and also because there was a girl that I liked in the orchestra, so I decided to do it, too. They needed a bass player, but I didn't yet take it seriously; that instrument was a beast to get on and off the school bus,

Getty

and what they were teaching us to play was not the kind of music that I was interested in.

Still, my upright bass studies lasted a while, and they ended up being even more interesting to me because I was always auditioning for parts. Schools had pretty good music programs back in the day, and they'd do recitals where there would be a theme that the music teacher would come up with. We'd all find our spot, and those who cared about music were encouraged to be a part of it.

I was a singer, too, and I always tried out for vocal solo parts. I was probably the best candidate for it, but because of my disciplinary record they would often overlook me and choose someone else – even though I did a better job during auditions, and I knew it.

My mom tells me that I decided to become a performer when I was three years old. 'All you used to say was that you wanted to have a truck, and then you'd put a band in it, and you'd go around and play songs,' she once told me. Other kids wanted to be a fireman or a policeman. Not me!

David Vincent's new autobiography, *I Am Morbid*, written with this magazine's Editor Joel McIver, is out now.
Info: www.facebook.com/officialdavidvincent

Goods Times

Bassist and bandleader Richie Goods has played with a stellar cast of stars including Alicia Keys, Common, Whitney Houston, Lenny White, Christina Aguilera and many others. Here, the prolific musician returns with a new album, *My Left Hand Man*, in honour of his late mentor, pianist Mulgrew Miller

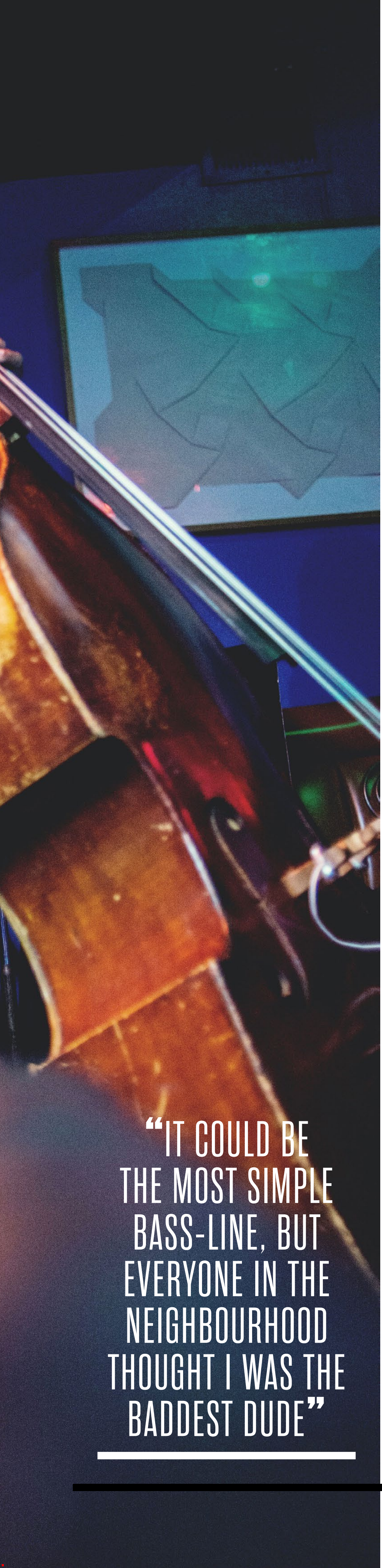
Interview: Joel McIver

What kind of person was Mulgrew Miller, Richie?
Mulgrew was the most amazing person I've ever met. He was one of the most respected jazz musicians on the scene, and such a kind, friendly, fun-loving person. He didn't drink, he didn't do drugs, he didn't smoke, but he didn't look down upon people that did these things. People have to live their lives the way they live their lives, and he lived his the way he lived his. He would introduce me as his left-hand man because that's the bass side of the piano.

How do you go about translating a personality like that into your record?
A part of me was like, 'I just want to do his music justice', and I was a tiny bit concerned what people would say, because I took some of Mulgrew's great jazz compositions and made them into R&B songs. But the thing is, Mulgrew played in my first band in New York. I had a fusion band. Mulgrew played my very first gig. It was Mulgrew, Cindy Blackman and Jeffrey Lockhart. Mulgrew played Fender Rhodes and synthesisers in a tiny little club with me, so his mind was open, and so I know he would appreciate it.

The bass is full and front and centre on the album.
Thank you. I use a Fodera Emperor Standard. It's a five-string, and I endorse D'Addario. I love their really bright strings, the Pro Steel 45 to 130 gauge. On the acoustic bass, I use D'Addario Pizzicato. I love those. They're kind of difficult to bow when I need to bow, but for pizzicato, man, they sound beautiful. All the bass tracks were recorded live. That's how I knew I got the right musicians, because I felt so relaxed in the studio that every song was either one or two takes. I feel like when you start to get into too many takes, the music starts to lose its magic and then I start losing perception.

How did you first get into bass?
I started playing piano when I was five. I always wanted to be a drummer, but my mother said, 'You have to play the piano first'. I studied from age five to age eight, and then she said 'Now you can play the drums'. I kept playing drums and piano, and then I started playing saxophone. When I went to a performing arts high school, I auditioned on drums and saxophone, and I also played xylophone in the jazz band. Then I wanted to play electric guitar, and this guy was supposed to give me a guitar. I gave him some money, and he ended up giving me a bass because he didn't have a guitar to give me. I fell in love with the bass and I just went insane practising. I started out



“IT COULD BE THE MOST SIMPLE BASS-LINE, BUT EVERYONE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD THOUGHT I WAS THE BADDEST DUDE”

on four hours a day, and by the time I was 16, I wasn't doing schoolwork any more, I was putting in eight hours a day on the bass. By the time I was in college, I was putting in between six and twelve hours. I was just a fanatic.

Were you following a programme of study?
I would go through different things in my practice routine. I always allowed myself time just to play, to create something that I loved on the bass. I would devote a lot of time to technical things. I took acoustic bass lessons, so I learned proper hand positioning, but most of my electric bass training is self-taught, and a good part of the acoustic bass is self-taught, too. I would develop my own exercises. I would learn a solo or something, or a melody, and I would come to a tricky part that I couldn't play, and so I would make that into an exercise and figure out, 'What is the problem, the left hand or the right hand?' I would make exercises out of those, and I would run those for hours.

When the passion hits you when you're young, nothing's going to get you off that instrument.
No, it wouldn't. But also, I grew up in Pittsburgh, in a predominantly black neighborhood. I was into rock music, folk music, gospel music, R&B, funk and rap. I was into all of that. In my neighborhood, it was all about the bass. It was all about Bootsy Collins and Louis Johnson. It could be the most simple bass-line, but if I could play that, everyone in the neighbourhood thought I was the baddest dude.

Which other bass players influenced you?
Bootsy was the number one, my very first influence on the bass. Later, when I was about 15, a friend of mine told me, 'You're a bass player, right? So you're going to see Stanley Clarke'. I said, 'Who?' and he was like, 'You call yourself a bass player and you don't know who Stanley Clarke is?' So I went to see Stanley on a school night. The opening band went on at nine o'clock, so Stanley came on about 11. I was tired, but when he came on, my mind was just blown. He's the reason I started playing acoustic bass. I said, 'Stanley Clarke is the best, and he plays electric and upright, so I have to play electric and upright'.

Have you been a musician since then?
My whole life has been music and sports. I've been so dedicated to both of them since I can remember. I played every sport under the sun. I really wanted to be a professional football player, and around

high school I had to decide if I was going to go to my local high school and pursue football, or go to the performing arts high school. My counsellor urged me to take the latter route. He said, 'You have this gift for music. You should go to performing arts high school, with the intention of being a professional musician'. I said, 'You mean I could get paid to do this? This could be my job?' He said, 'Oh, absolutely'.

Sound advice.
I wish I knew who that counsellor was, at Gladstone High School in Hazelwood, Pittsburgh, because he made a career in music seem possible to me. Some people think music is hit or miss, it's luck of the draw, maybe you can get your big break. He didn't make it seem like that. He made it seem like, if you want to be a doctor, you put in the work, you study, and you'll be a doctor. I always said, 'This is what I'm going to do'.

Did you always have that confidence?
I'll never forget the first day at the performing arts high school. The first day, the music teacher said, 'Don't think that you're going to make a career out of music. Probably only one of you in this whole graduating class will'. I didn't know anyone in that school, and I stood up and faced the class, and I said, 'Well, sorry, guys. That's going to be me'. I wasn't a cocky person. I was always really humble, but when it came to music, I was confident. I just knew that making it was not a question.

People are going to love your new album.
Thank you. I spent a lot of time working out the arrangements, about six to nine months going over it, picking the material. But once we got in the studio, I had the right guys, and I feel like they just made magic happen. I'm really happy with it. I think Mulgrew would be happy, too.

My Left Hand Man is out now. www.richiegoods.com

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More information at **www.harleybenton.com**

Harley Benton

★CLASSIC★ ROCK
HIGH VOLTAGE ROCK'N'ROLL

www.classicrockmagazine.com

GEAR REVIEWS

Behold our world-beating bass gear review section, where we bring you the crop of each month's new, interesting or otherwise relevant bass guitars, bass amplifiers, bass cabs and bass effects. Occasionally we'll review a guitar effect if it's useful for bassists, but generally speaking, this zone is reserved for bass-specific gear.

We take our reviews seriously. *BGM* is the only print magazine devoted to bass in this country, and we have readers all over the world, so we're responsible about our conclusions. If a product is worth your time, we'll say so; if it's flawed, we'll make that clear. We're not beholden to advertisers in any way, and our tests are independent of the views of manufacturers and distributors.

When you read about a product here, you're getting a balanced review from an experienced bass tester. Value for money is at the top of our agenda in these cash-strapped times, but on the other hand, we believe in paying for quality.

Right, that's enough from me, and remember, this is just about the only place that it's good to have GAS!*

Joel McIver, Editor

*GAS = Gear Acquisition Syndrome (a malaise often suffered by bass players)

RICKENBACKER
Al Cisneros 4003 AC

Sleep and OM bassist Al Cisneros is the latest of a very short list of bassists to get his own signature Rickenbacker. Do we want to review it, they asked? Not only does the Editor say yes, he doesn't want to give it back afterwards...

Rosetti
www.rosetti.co.uk

£4350

If you're not familiar with the work of Al Cisneros, bassist with the stoner-rock band Sleep and the experimental act OM, we recommend that you head to YouTube without delay. If you're not into heavy music, don't let that put you off; bassists of all musical preferences will learn from his unique approach to the instrument. Formed primarily of droned figures and chords, played with a heavy fingerstyle anchored close to (or actually on) the neck, Cisneros' method refers back to pioneers such as Geezer Butler while also being wholly his own.

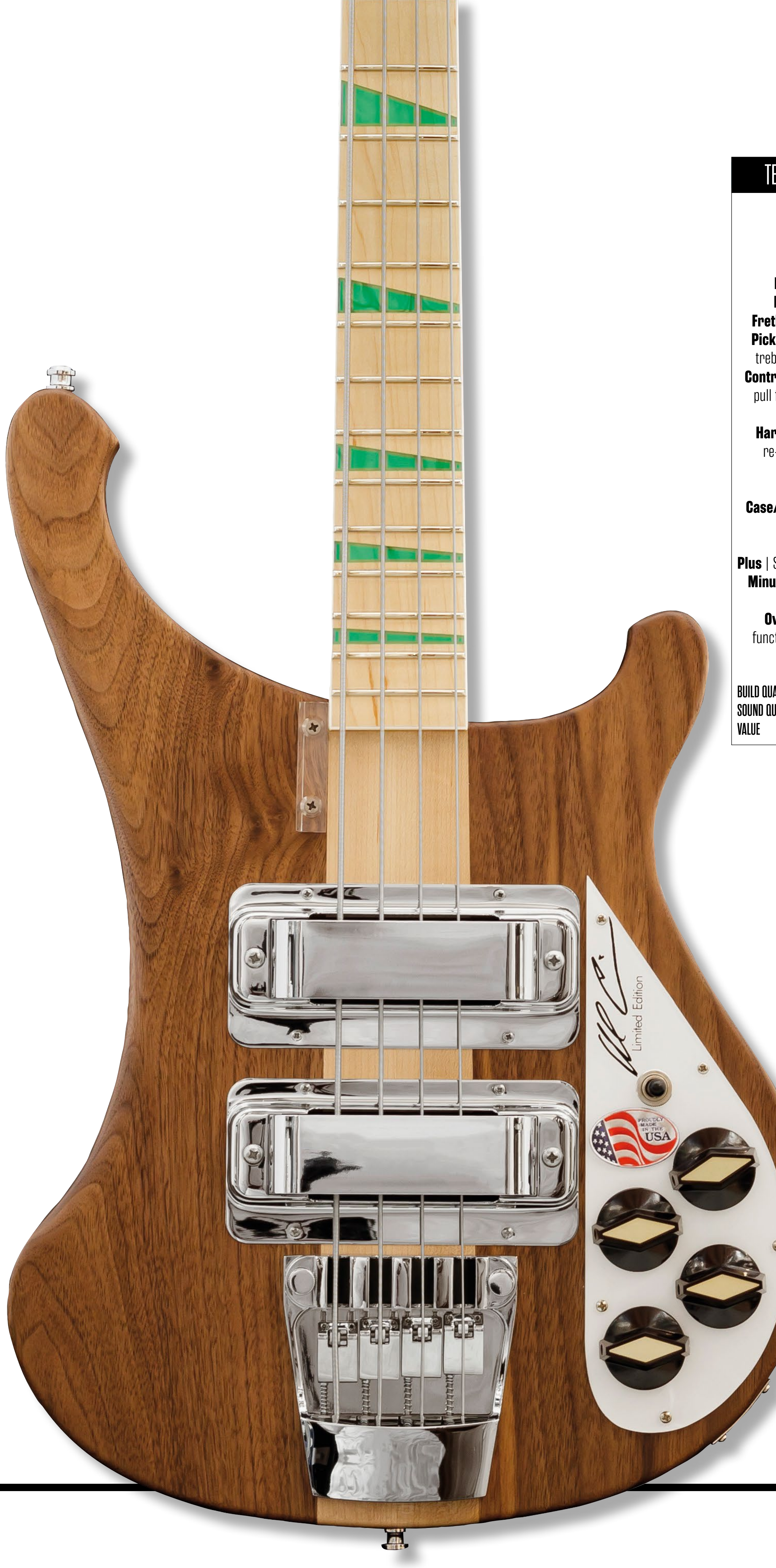
We mention this because Cisneros' new Rickenbacker 4003 is designed to fulfil the particular needs of his playing style. For example, had he been a pick player, attacking the strings down by the bridge, the massive bezels which cover the pickups would not have been included. As he plucks the strings by the neck, they're present and correct. In addition, so much of Cisneros' music is thematically or otherwise related to smoking weed that the neck inlays are green, and only 420 models are being made (4/20, get it?). Whether or not you personally ingest the stuff, you have to agree that it makes for a fascinating art direction.

So how does it play? And does it justify its immense price tag? Let's plug in and find out...

Build Quality

At this price, there should be no build flaws in this passive, through-neck bass, and moreover, we expect to be impressed by the high quality of the components, judgmental hacks that we are. Fortunately, this bass is a miracle of modern engineering from top to bottom, with real thought evidently put into every working element by Cisneros and Rickenbacker.

The specific innovations which Cisneros has asked Ricky to include begin with serious modifications such as the 'newly re-engineered' (their term, our quotes) tailpiece and bridge with adjustable saddles. As research into one or two bass forums reveals, more than a few Rickenbacker fans have wanted the 4003 bridge to feature adjustable saddles for some time, although there are



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £4350
Made In | USA, 420 only
Body | Walnut
Neck | Maple, 33.25" scale
Neck Join | Neck-through
Fretboard | Maple, bound, 20 frets
Pickups | 2 x hot-wound single-coil trebles, removable bezels supplied
Controls | 2 x volume, 2 x tone (push/pull for vintage tone), 3-way pickup selector
Hardware | Rickenbacker 'newly re-engineered' bridge, Schaller Deluxe tuners
Weight | 4.1 kg / 9 lbs
Case/gigbag included? | Hard case

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Superb build quality and playability
Minus | Wacky Ricky tones and looks aren't for everyone
Overall | A exceptionally high-functioning instrument; do try it out

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

> "THOUGH THERE'S NO GETTING AWAY FROM THE COST, THIS BASS WILL LAST A LIFETIME IF YOU LOOK AFTER IT"

a similar number of bassists for whom such modern fripperies are practically blasphemous. The body's light oil finish, which is barely detectable under the fingers, will no doubt divide opinions, too.

Other changes include the use of two hot-wound treble pickups, as distinct from the 4003's usual one bass, one treble pickup configuration, and a slight migration down the body (i.e. away from the neck) of the upper pickup. Less radical stuff includes a signed pickguard, custom knobs, green inlays – which usually denote a stereo-output bass, although this one is mono – and a transparent thumb rest at the base of the neck. The maple neck and fretboard are bound, too, the bass has Schaller open-gear elephant-ear tuners, and the truss rod can be adjusted for both up-bow and back-bow.

Otherwise, in terms of features, this is a standard, if highly souped-up, 4003W – with all the expectations of performance that Ricky fans should rightly demand.

Sounds And Playability

Traditionalists will not be disappointed. The Cisneros 4003 sounds almost comedically like a Rickenbacker if you leave the tone controls flat, with a scratchy, percussive start to each note, followed by that thin, clear, glassy, transparent bloom that we all know. Roll the top end off and select the front pickup and it becomes much warmer and James Jamerson-like, however, and the bottom end is fairly thick and heavy when maxed out. Play up in the higher register, and the clank goes away without you needing to dial it out.

The point of the two treble pickups – one of which is closer to the bridge than you'd normally expect – is obviously to compensate for the tonal consequences of Cisneros' playing style. Rest your thumb on the rest, all the way up by the neck, and you'll hear exactly what we mean. That playing position, where you benefit from a slightly rubbery feel to the strings as you pluck them, is easy on the hand and encourages expressive playing, but at the same time it's hardly conducive to high mids and top end. Thanks to the aforementioned tweaks, there's plenty of both available.

The bass is highly playable in that position, make no mistake – the rear neck finish is beautifully smooth, and the finger-friendly nut width of 42.9mm (1-11/16") encourages you to stretch out, even if it does feel a bit weird at first. If you prefer to address the strings elsewhere, or if you use a pick, take off the bezels and you'll be fine. The instrument's weight is highly manageable, too; the giant bridge means that there's a lot of metal attached to this instrument, but at nine pounds, your back should be happy ('should' being the operative word).

Conclusion

The 4003 AC is an excellent bass, fully-featured, fully-finished and very pleasant to play. The tones are great and the components pretty much state of the art. The only two issues that come to mind are the price, which is a painful kick in the wallet no matter how you frame it, and the fact that this bass is set up to meet the specific needs of a bassist with an unusual playing style.

The second of these is highly soluble – just rearrange the hardware and you're good to go – but there's no getting away from the massive cost, other than to state that you're definitely getting value for money, and that this bass will no doubt last a lifetime if you look after it. Placed in that context, is this actually an expensive item? Not particularly. Give it a shot, with our full recommendation.

Rickenbacker
MADE IN U.S.A.
Limited Edition

WILCOCK Mullarkey

Short-scale loveliness from the workshop of Viv Wilcock, whose instruments are creating a buzz. Mike Brooks assesses the goods

The Bass Gallery
www.thebassgallery.com

£1500

This bass, a signature model for in-demand sessioneer Rob Mullarkey, is designed to his specification, although it should be noted that all Wilcock basses can be customised to the player's preference. With their distinctive body shape and short scale, Wilcock basses have garnered considerable attention lately – so what does £1500 get you?

Build Quality

The level of finishing and overall quality is striking from the moment you pick the bass up. The gloss body and neck show off the timber figuring; the roasted maple neck is blessed with a flame figure that stands out because of its practically three-dimensional quality – this also extends to the headstock facing. The three-tone sunburst finish gives the alder body an all-round vintage appearance, while the black scratchplate, chrome bridge, pickup covers and control plate maintain the understated look of this bass.

The rounded body curves and minimal horns provide good balance, while the rear contouring is significantly deeper than the contouring to the front body bout. While lower cutaway access is good, reaching the highest frets requires a bit of a stretch – but this is compensated for with the 30" scale and 18mm string spacing. The scale gives the strings a slightly rubbery feel due to the reduced speaking length and tension of the strings, but for some players, this may be a bonus.

Two single-coil custom-wound Armstrong pickups sit inside the humbucker housings, while Hipshot hardware has been used throughout, all of which works as it should and operates smoothly. The control set is pleasingly simple, with just a volume, passive tone and three-way pickup selector switch to contend with.

Sounds And Playability

Even before plugging in, the Mullarkey displays a rich, warm, smooth tone. The acoustic tone resonates strongly, and sustain doesn't appear to be compromised by the shorter scale length. As a passive, short-scale instrument, you might think the tones will be predictable – but the combination of materials and hardware add up to a surprising tone mix. Plugged in, warm tones ring out, clear as a bell. The sound is kept from being overly bass-heavy by the nature of the single-coil pickups, whose delivery maintains clarity throughout.

Moving between each pickup shows some fine tones, all of which are usable; thankfully the full palette of options gives a pleasing spread, although you may find yourself resorting to selecting both

pickups for the bulk of your playing time. Fingerstyle naturally sounds very pleasing, especially when selecting the bridge pickup, while pick playing adds projection, should you want it.

Both controls operate across the whole turn, giving the player full control of the sound, while opening up the tone control fully provides a distinct rasp that, should you wish to dig in, offers up an abrasive bark. Wind that tone control back and you're straight into Jamerson/Motown territory, even more so if you choose to fit some flatwound strings on the bass.

Comfort has been well-considered and overall, this is supremely comfortable to play – a real joy, in fact. The dimensions and set-up are excellent, while the slim neck profile fits your fretting hand like a glove. The reduced string spacing works with the tight fret positioning and although this may take some getting used to, you'll soon find yourself whizzing around the neck. The balance is excellent and on a strap, the bass sits very comfortably across the player's body.

Conclusion

If the Mullarkey is any indication of the quality of instrument emanating from the Wilcock workshop, I now understand what the fuss is about. Some basses speak to you the moment you pick them up and is this is one such instrument. It feels superb and plays like butter off a hot knife. Audition one at your earliest convenience!

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £1500
Made In | UK
Colour | Three-tone sunburst, gloss finish
Body | Alder
Neck | Roasted flame maple, 30" scale, gloss finish
Neck Joint | Bolt-on, four-bolt attachment
Nut Width | 40mm
Fingerboard | Roasted flame maple
Frets | 20
Pickups | Armstrong custom-wound single-coil pickups x 2
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Volume, tone, three-way pickup selector
Hardware | Chrome hardware, Hipshot Kickass bridge, Hipshot Superlite machine heads
Weight | 3.5 kg / 7.11 lbs
Case/gig bag included | Gigbag
Left-hand option available | Yes, as a custom order

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Great passive tones
Minus | The shorter scale provides a slightly rubbery string feel
Overall | A real winner at this price

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

ORANGE
Little Bass Thing

Orange return with a new amp that defies its physical dimensions. Mike 'Agent Orange' Brooks dons his flak jacket prior to testing

Orange
www.orangeamps.com

£549

Orange's Terror Bass amp was a notable success – but this new model takes the Class D power stage of the Terror, matches it with a solid-state preamp and throws an optical compressor in for good measure. What happens when we plug in? Stand clear...

Build Quality

Weighing in around the three-kilo mark, Orange amps are built to last, and the Little Bass Thing is no exception in its white, metallic chassis. Venting is provided on both sides of the casing to improve airflow, and the amp comes with metal handle protectors at the front.

The control set is simply laid out and obvious, with a three-band EQ with sweepable mids, compressor, input for the optional footswitch, FX loop and XLR DI output. The controls are solidly attached, although the quality of the plastic does feel a little cheap.

An added bonus is that the amp can be used for recording or live purposes without having to have a speaker load attached.

Sounds

Simplicity is the name of the game here, and with 15dB of cut and boost across all three frequency bands, obtaining usable tones is relatively simply and intuitive. Getting a tone you can work with takes no time at all. Making use of the -6dB pad to tame a hot bass output helps to reduce the amount of drive in your signal.

As with most Orange amps, drive and distortion are where this amp's heart is – so if a clean, robust bass signal is your requirement, you may wish to look elsewhere. For the rockers out there, this amp is as gig-friendly as you could hope for, and with plenty of grind and bite on tap, a colourful, harmonically rich bass tone is guaranteed. The bass and middle controls have a marked effect on the tones, although the treble control was a little polite compared to the other two.

The compressor is very effective, but although the amp is loud – pleasingly so – it does become rather hissy, especially when treble is added. Passive basses react favourably, but active basses may need a little experimentation to find settings that get the most from the amp.

Conclusion

If you're after a small, portable but powerful rock amp, certainly add the LBT to your audition list. What it does, it does very well..

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

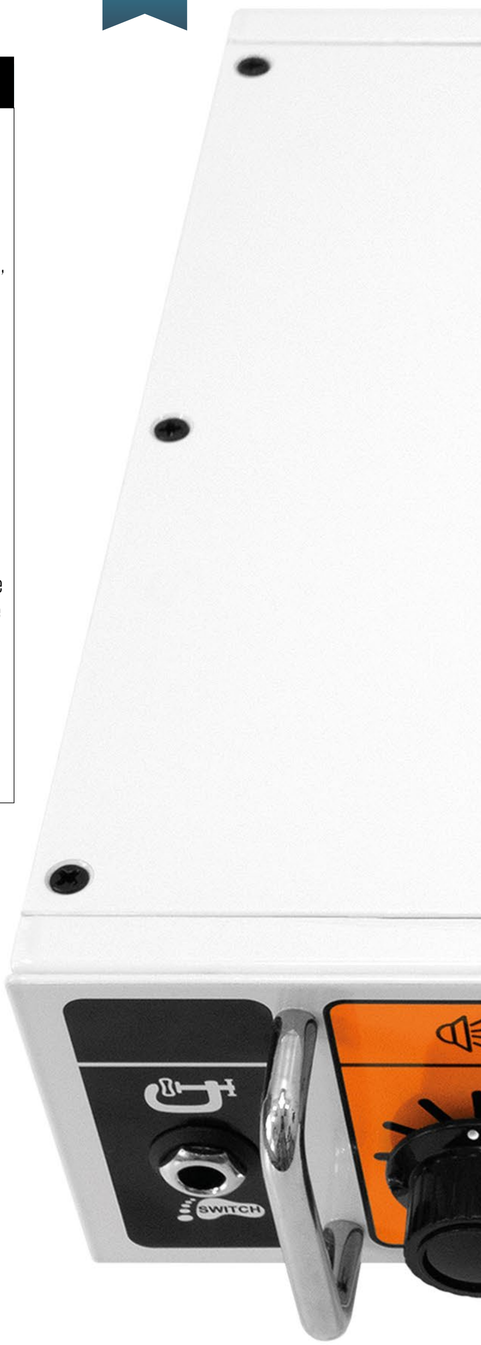
Price | £549
Made In | China
Power | 500 watts @ 4 ohms
Features | ¼" jack footswitch socket, Volume, Compression, Treble, Mid-Sweep, Middle, Bass, -6dB pad switch, ¼" jack input socket, voltage selector, 2 x Speakon output sockets, ¼" jack Send/Return sockets, Lift/Ground switch, Balanced DI XLR output socket
Dimensions | 86mm / 3.4" (H) x 278mm / 11" (W) x 246mm / 9.7" (D)
Weight | 2.95 kg / 6.5 lbs

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Light, powerful and effective
Minus | A lot of competition at this price
Overall | Sensibly priced addition to the Orange range

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□



VOICE OF THE WORLD
PAD

EPIFANI
DIST2 2x10 Cabinet

We recently evaluated Epifani's UL 901 amp and, delighted with what we found, we requested a cabinet to pair with it. Behold the DIST2 2x10, says Joe Daly

Epifani
www.epifani.com

£750

In view of the impressive strides that Epifani have made in the amplifier space, one might overlook that founder Nick Epifani first made his bones in cabinets. In fact, he launched Epifani back in 1994 after failing to find a reliably-constructed bass cab that offered state-of-the-art engineering, gig-sized power and economy of design.

The DIST2 is a redesign of their DIST line, boasting a new dual voice-coil speaker design and some interesting new electronics. We immediately note the cabinet's weight. Like the UL 901, the DIST2 proves astonishingly light. As it weighs a mere 17 kilos or 42 pounds, we feel like Superman, effortlessly swinging it in and out of our practice room with nary a grunt. Thankfully, the cab's lower back-friendly portability factor does not come at the expense of power. Plugging in and thumping down on the E-string, the room fills with a booming potency throughout a range of mids and highs. Testing out a five-string, the low B pours cleanly from the cab, without any discernible rattle or humming.

In line with Epifani's premium on design, the DIST2 avoids any unnecessary frills and the back panel is a study in efficiency. Beneath the Input and Output jacks, a small red switch – the only visible feature that's not black or yellow – allows the player to select an impedance of either 4 or 8 Ohm. This means that if you're rocking a single cab, you can set the impedance to 4 Ohms, and you're good to go; however, if you add a second cab, simply toggle to 8 Ohm, which will result in a total impedance of 4 Ohms. The crossover automatically sends the right frequencies to the tweeters and woofers, so the player literally has only the one choice to make.

Much to our dog's annoyance, we push the amp into neighbour-bothering volumes and the tone remains clear and powerful, even when we muddy it up a bit. Also available in a 1x12 configuration, the stylish design looks good on stage and the build quality is solid. Through all reasonable efforts, we are unable to find the cabinet's sonic Achilles heel. Epifani bills the DIST2 as a high-performing, no-frills cab borne out of over 25 years' worth of feedback and improvement. Our verdict: while it's not cheap, the serious or professional player will find much to love in the DIST2.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £750
Made In | USA
Features | 2 x 10" 250+ Watt Epifani Neodymium Dual Voice-Coil drivers, 1 x 1" compression tweeter with adjustable control, user switchable between 4 Ohms and 8 Ohms, recessed steel handles, Lite-Ply Italian Poplar with Dado joint construction
Power | 500+ Watts RMS
Response | 40Hz-16kHz
Sensitivity | 103dB (1W@1m)
Dimensions | 469mm x 584mm x 450mm (18.5" x 23" x 17.75")
Weight | 17.2 kg (42 lbs)
Connections | 2 x Combination Neutrik Speakon and ¼" input/output connectors

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Immensely gig-friendly; powerful, sturdy and extremely portable
Minus | For professionals only
Overall | An elite, gig-worthy cab

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY ■■■■■■■■■■
SOUND QUALITY ■■■■■■■■■■
VALUE ■■■■■■■■■□

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BASS TUITION

Making you a better bass player

Welcome to our tuition section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in... **Joel McIver, editor**

Kickstart your journey to the top of the bass world here!
Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist. Across nearly two decades of touring, and a huge catalogue of solo and collaborative albums, he's built up a worldwide audience for his looping and processing approach to bass sound. Recent collaborators include Beardyman, Reeves Gabrels, Andy Gangadeen, Tanya Donelly, Divinity Roxx and Jonas Hellborg. He been teaching bass for over two decades, and lectures at universities and colleges across the globe. Victor Wooten once commented, 'Steve Lawson is a brilliant musician. I've known about him and listened to him for many years. He may not be one of the most famous bassists – but he is definitely one of the most talented'. Who are we to argue?
www.stevelawson.net

STEVE LAWSON

Beginners | 66

Now you're rolling with theory and techniques, it's time to hit the next level
Philip Mann studied at the London College of Music, securing bachelor's and master's degrees in performance before receiving a scholarship to study under Jeff Berlin at the Players School of Music in Florida. Endorsed by Overwater and Vanderkley, he's now a busy international freelancing electric and double bassist. His performance and session credits include work with double Grammy Award-winning guitarist Albert Lee, five-time Grammy Award nominee Hunter Hayes, Deep Purple's Steve Morse, Billy Bragg and country artist Peter Donegan. He has featured as a solo demonstration artist at the London Bass Guitar Show every year since 2012 and is currently a member of the visiting faculty at the Players School while also lecturing for Scott's Bass Lessons.

PHIL MANN

Intermediate | 70

Take the bass world by storm with the ultimate tuition section
Stuart Clayton has been a professional musician, writer and transcriber since 2002 and has worked in function bands, cruise ship gigs, theatre shows and more. He spent four years recording and touring the world with legendary Emerson, Lake & Palmer drummer Carl Palmer and has worked for *BGM* since its first issue. Since 2007 Stuart has worked as the Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Bristol, where he continues to teach all levels of the degree course. In addition, he has also worked as the Bass Guitar Technical Specialist for the Rockschool exam board. Stuart now runs Bassline Publishing, which publishes transcription books for bassists such as Mark King, Marcus Miller, Stuart Hamm, Bernard Edwards, Stuart Zender and John Entwistle, as well as an acclaimed range of tuition books.

STUART CLAYTON

Advanced | 76

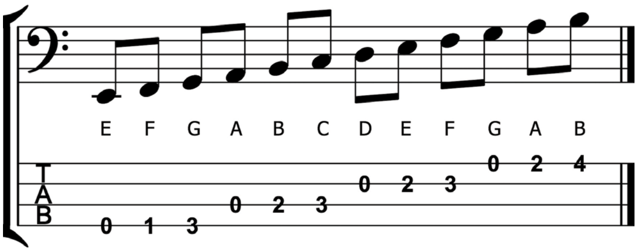
BGM Notation Legend

The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in *Bass Guitar Magazine*

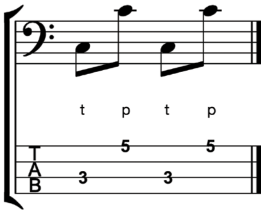
The Stave: most music written for the bass guitar uses the bass clef. The example to the right shows the placement of the notes on the stave.

Tablature: this is a graphical representation of the music. Each horizontal line corresponds with a string on the bass guitar, with the lowest line representing the lowest pitched string (E). The numbers represent the frets to be played. Numbers stacked vertically indicate notes that are played together. Where basses with five or six strings are required, the tablature stave will have five or six lines as necessary.

Notes shown in brackets indicate that a note has been tied over from a previous bar.

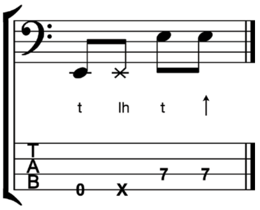


PLAYING TECHNIQUES



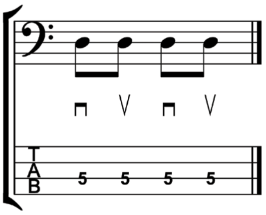
SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE

Notes slapped with the thumb are marked with a 't', notes popped with the fingers marked with a 'p'



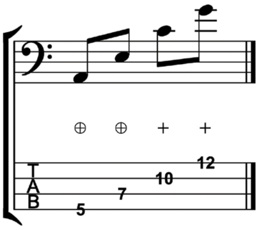
ADVANCED SLAP TECHNIQUE

Fretting hand slaps are marked 'lh' and double thumbing upstrokes are shown with an upward pointing arrow



PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE

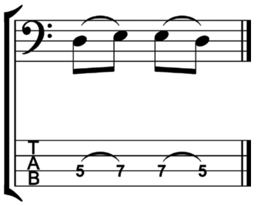
Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up)



TAPPING TECHNIQUES

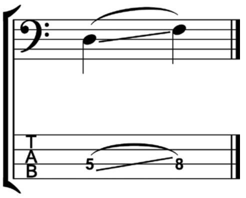
Fretting hand taps are shown with a '+' in a circle. Picking hand taps are just '+'. Particular fingers may be shown with numbers.

FRETTING TECHNIQUES



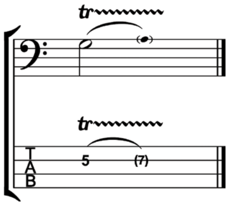
HAMMER-ON AND PULL-OFF

Hammer-ons and pull-offs are shown with a slur over the notes. Only the first note is plucked by the picking hand



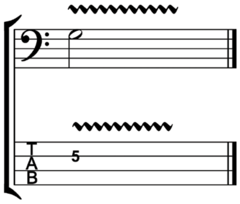
SLIDE (GLISSANDO)

Slides are performed by playing the first note then sliding the fretting finger up to the second note



TRILLS

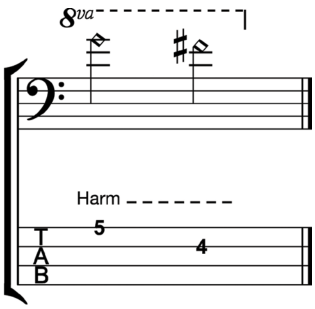
Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown using hammer-ons and pull-offs



VIBRATO

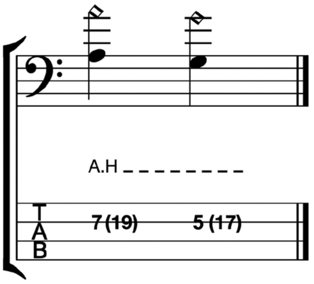
The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger

PLAYING HARMONICS



NATURAL HARMONICS

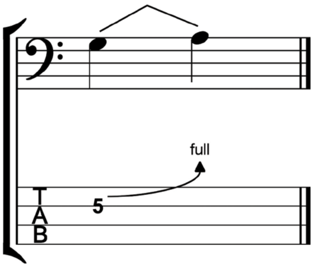
The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated



ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS

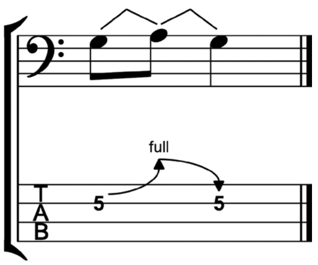
Pluck the string while fretting the lower note and touching the edge of the picking hand's thumb to the note in brackets

BENDING NOTES



BEND

The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: ½ = semitone, full = tone



BEND AND RELEASE

The note is bent up to the interval indicated then released back to its original pitch

THE FRONTLINE

Want to make it as a pro bassist? Listen up as *BGM*'s world-class bass team reports from the tourbus

THE JAZZ BASSIST

RUTH GOLLER

Do we need to read music, asks jazz warrior Ruth

One of the best aspects of music, in my opinion, is the infinitely different ways with which people learn and approach it. Hopefully we find common ground somewhere, even though we have differing skills – whether that means how quickly we can memorise material, how we perceive harmony differently, and whether we read music or not.

I had the experience recently of playing with someone who can't read music. For him, it has always been that way, as he came through a tradition of playing blues guitar which didn't focus on sight-reading; it's also notoriously difficult to become quick at sight-reading on the guitar. This meant that when we met, there were all sorts of things that didn't quickly fit together. I'm used to getting a piece of paper with chords, a written bass-line, a melody line for reference or some rhythmic hits. This information makes sense to me immediately, whereas my guitarist colleague had to commit each part to memory section by section, working out by ear what was going on.

This approach to the music took much longer, and there were a lot of mistakes – but here's the thing: once the music was organised in his head, he had the whole project deeply embedded in his memory. He knew the structure completely, and could make great harmonic choices for that reason. This was because he had trained himself to have a really great ear. As a result, he found a way around not being able to read music.

This got me thinking about whether there has to be a duality between people who can read, so they rely too much on notation and don't train their ears enough, and people who can't read and have to build up another sense to compensate. Of course, you can do both – ear training, as well as with being able to read, gives you much more choice. It won't guarantee that you make interesting music, but it will help you to articulate your ideas better.

www.ruthgoller.com

THE TV STAR

DAVE SWIFT

Learn to love terrible bass gear, advises Swifty

I've just finished a week's residency at a renowned jazz, blues and soul venue in London called Boisdale, which has clubs in four London locations. I play regularly at each one with various artists, musicians and bands. A great perk for me is that each venue provides a house double bass and amp. Luxury! It's a big bonus that I don't have to lug a double bass and backline into central London on a regular basis.

The downside is that each bass has its own idiosyncrasies and presents its own challenges. Despite this, it's important to be able to turn up at the last minute and play effectively, even though the bass isn't your own or set up to your personal preference. In these circumstances, you have to do everything you can to make each instrument sound as good as possible.

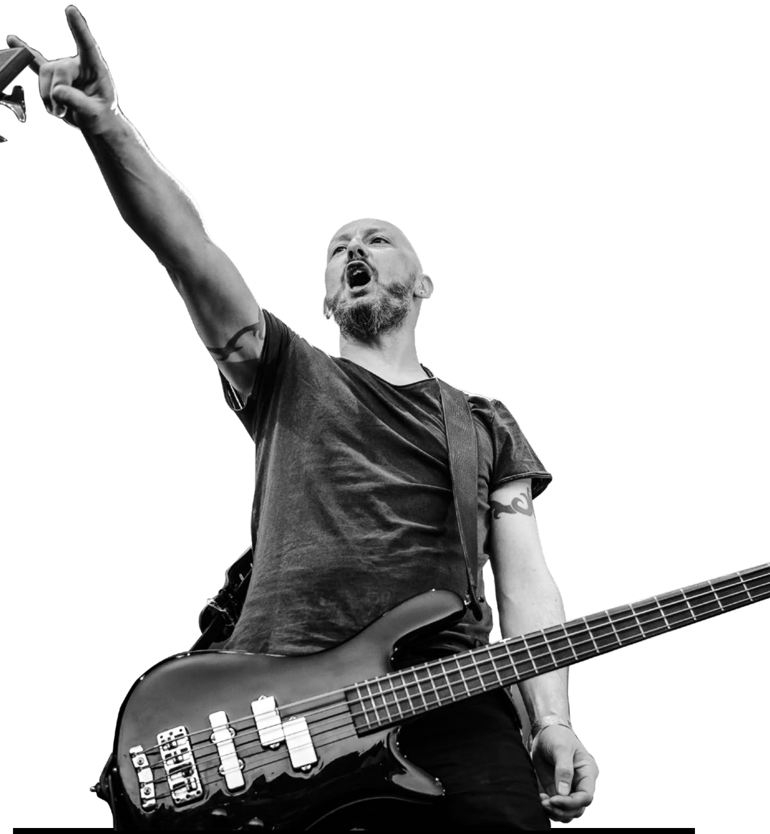
Of course, this isn't always easy. I've been on world tours where I've had to play numerous hired double basses of poor quality, with super-high actions, non-adjustable bridges and end pins, dead spots, inferior strings and pickups, mismatched string sets... You name it. Fortunately, my 40 years of experience as a professional player have enabled me to deal with these issues, even if I have to grit my teeth, take a deep breath and hope for the best. Your fellow musicians, venue staff, crew and event organisers generally don't want to hear your frustration and complaints about the supplied instruments, so if you find yourself in a similar position, it's important to be appreciative, grateful and as gracious as possible.

We'd all rather play on world-class, well set-up instruments as often as possible, but when necessity prevails, it's a great test of our ability and tenacity to make an inferior bass sound good. Deal with this and you may even gain some new-found respect from your fellow bandmates...

www.daveswiftbass.com

Check out Dave's interview at www.knowyourbassplayer.com

Photo: Daniel Matúš Kotlár — Music Press Magazine



THE METALHEAD

DANIEL FIRTH

Don't settle for 'good enough', warns Dan

To wrap up my trio of columns on the subject of writing, I want to talk about appraising your work. When initially coming up with ideas, I think it's good to try and remove as many barriers to creativity as possible, and not worry about everything being totally polished. However, once you're actually constructing a song, and especially in the finishing stages of the process, it's time to start being hard on yourself.

I believe that for a piece of music to make the grade, it needs to really stir you. If that's not happening, or you're not feeling entirely sure about something, it probably needs more work. I've been known to spend days agonising over arrangements, which can be mentally taxing. You can easily become discouraged when you feel as if things aren't clicking, and the temptation might be to simply say 'That'll do'. However, if you manage to get a song working exactly the way you want, the elation you feel makes all the effort worthwhile.

Having said that, there's only so long that you can hammer away at a song before having to admit you've reached a dead end. It can be frustrating to rewrite whole sections, completely restructure songs or even scrap them altogether, but this is just another part of the process. It's all about the quality of the end product, and sometimes creating something you're truly proud of requires drastic action. Certainly when I'm writing, I scrap more than I end up keeping. I might even decide that, on reflection, a whole song has given birth to one great riff and not much else. In that case, I'll take out that riff so I can build something better around it. As for what's been left behind, I try not to lament it, and put the experience down to learning.

I think that's important to remember: writing music is a skill to be learned and improved on, just like playing bass. There are many aspects to this learning process, but discovering what you feel works and doesn't work in various contexts is a big part of it.
www.cradleoffilth.com

THE ALTERNATIVE ROCKER

MICHAEL MCKEEGAN

Keeping all the bass balls in the air with Mike

I have a friend in a professional metal band who also plays in an avant-garde fusion project and has various cover and session gigs on the side as well. These days, many of us have a few musical projects on the go at one time – and whether it's professional or for fun, I'm always interested to hear how fellow bassists keep track of all their gigging and recording projects.

Writing bass parts for multiple projects was a challenge pre-home recording – although it did get done! – and even after the advent of affordable recording gear it was difficult to have the right gear set up at the right time to capture the moment. Of course, in the digital era we can record everything if need be, although sifting out the good stuff is a different matter. We can now log exact setups and profile pedal and amp configurations so that every factor in a signal chain can be recalled, but what good is that if you can't remember your parts, or the latest update?

Obviously 'works in progress' are a more challenging thing to nail down as they're often in a fluid, ever-changing state, with every rehearsal or jam yielding further development. Digital means aside, there's always good old pen and paper. I have to express extreme admiration – coupled with a hint of jealousy – for musicians who can write and chart out their parts in correct musical notation. Even tabbing a part can come with its own set of limitations, as it's sometimes hard to work out what the actual essence of a piece is when it's stripped of context.

If I'm ever concerned that my moment of inspiration will be lost, I use my own shorthand notation to quickly write the main gist of an idea down. To an unenlightened observer it probably won't mean anything, but I can usually get it documented well enough to prompt an accurate recall. Of course, there's always the idea that if a part is any good, you should remember how to play it regardless. The focus would then be on keeping parts hooky and memorable, playing from memory instead. Just imagine!
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STEVE LAWSON

Beginners' Tutorial

Novice mentor Steve returns to help us refine our use of patterns and expand our rhythmic possibilities...

Hello, again! As I mentioned before, one of the pitfalls we often fall into when learning sequences of notes on the bass, whether they're arpeggios (broken chords) or scales and modes, is that we often play long runs in sequence, despite that rarely corresponding to the kind of playing we actually end up doing in performance.

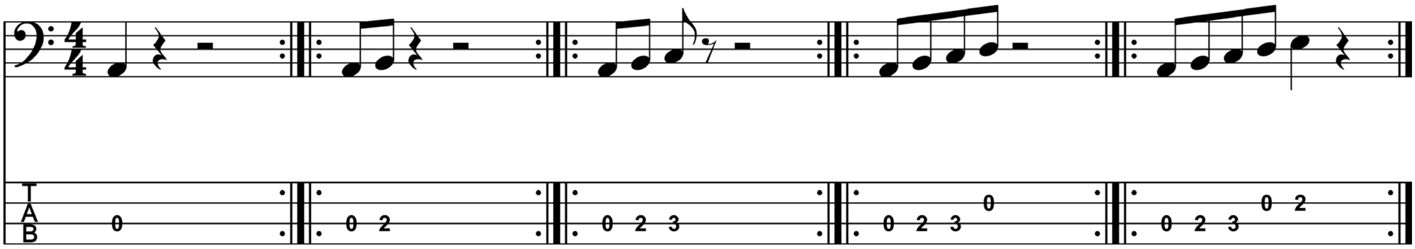
It's really important to keep the context for your practising rooted in the kind of music you play or want to learn. There are certainly abstract learning paths that can be fun and inspiring, but as beginners, there's so much more that is directly applicable. Refining the way we practise particular concepts or learn particular patterns can help deepen the connection between practising and performing.

Remember the old adage that 'you are what you eat'? For musicians, you are what you practice. There's no magical transformation that happens when you stop practising and start performing. If you want to be a versatile, nuanced performer, you need to practise in a nuanced and versatile way. And for bassists, the common focus on dexterity – gradually speeding up a metronome and thinking solely about how cleanly we can execute a given scale or exercise – is a bit misguided, given how rarely in a pop or rock context we need to call on those particular skills. If your first love is fusion or elaborate prog, your journey may end up there, but you still need to establish a foundation in less florid modes of performance.

So, this month we're going to explore a couple of ways to expand our sense of what's possible rhythmically with all of the interval work we've been looking at over the last few issues. Firstly, we're going to do a rhythm exercise that takes the notes in any given exercise and plays them in expanding groups in successive bars. If that sounds a little complex, the practical version is way easier to grasp.

Here's what it looks like. Remember that repeat bars around a section of music mean you play it twice, so here, repeat each bar before moving on:

Example 1



The notes here are just drawn from an A minor scale, mostly to make it easy to see how the pattern unfolds. This kind of exercise teaches us about a number of core concepts that will help shape our bass-lines. Firstly, there's space. By starting out with one note in the bar – and not even a sustained note, but one that only lasts for one beat – and repeating it, we get used to hearing the absence of a bass note as a significant creative choice. Think about how many stand-out bass-lines have space in them. Sting's bass-lines with the Police were often marked by a significant use of space, sometimes in between busy, complex lines, but also between simple, repetitive ones too.

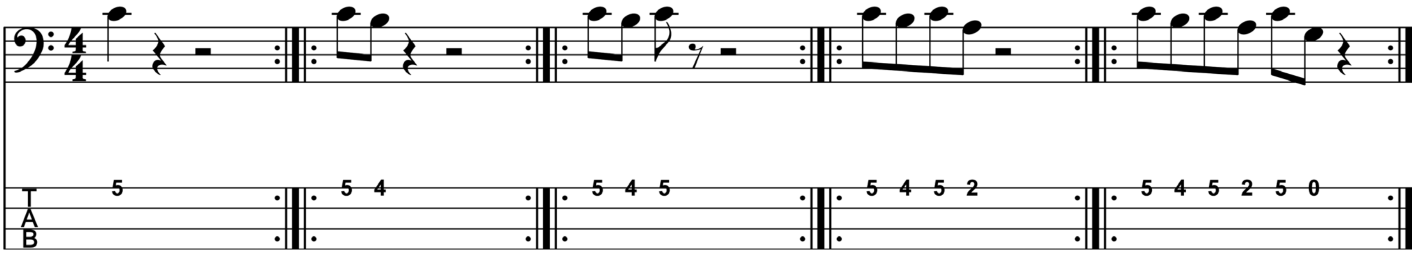
Secondly, it helps us to think about the way that patterns can build and evolve without us needing to write thousands of new sections to a song. There has been a trend in recent years towards much simpler songwriting; the kind of harmony that has dominated country music for over 50 years. That kind of shift can offer a lot of opportunities to build our contribution to the song in a more progressive way, developing a line under repeated verses rather than writing multiple sections. This can also be a good way to offer a range of possibilities to your bandmates, so you can find a level at which the line has the right amount of space in it for the song. Just keep adding a note each time until everyone digs what's happening, rather than jumping straight in and filling it all up with sound!

Thirdly, it teaches us that pattern playing can be varied in any one of a thousand different ways. I've written the sequence of notes here simply going up the scale, but if you go back to any of the intervallic exercises we've been doing over the last few months, they can be revisited with this concept. Start with the first note of the pattern, then two, then three...

Even pros such as U2's Adam Clayton build bass-lines from simple exercises

"THESE EXERCISES HELP US THINK ABOUT HOW PATTERNS CAN EVOLVE AND BE VARIED IN ANY ONE OF A THOUSAND DIFFERENT WAYS"

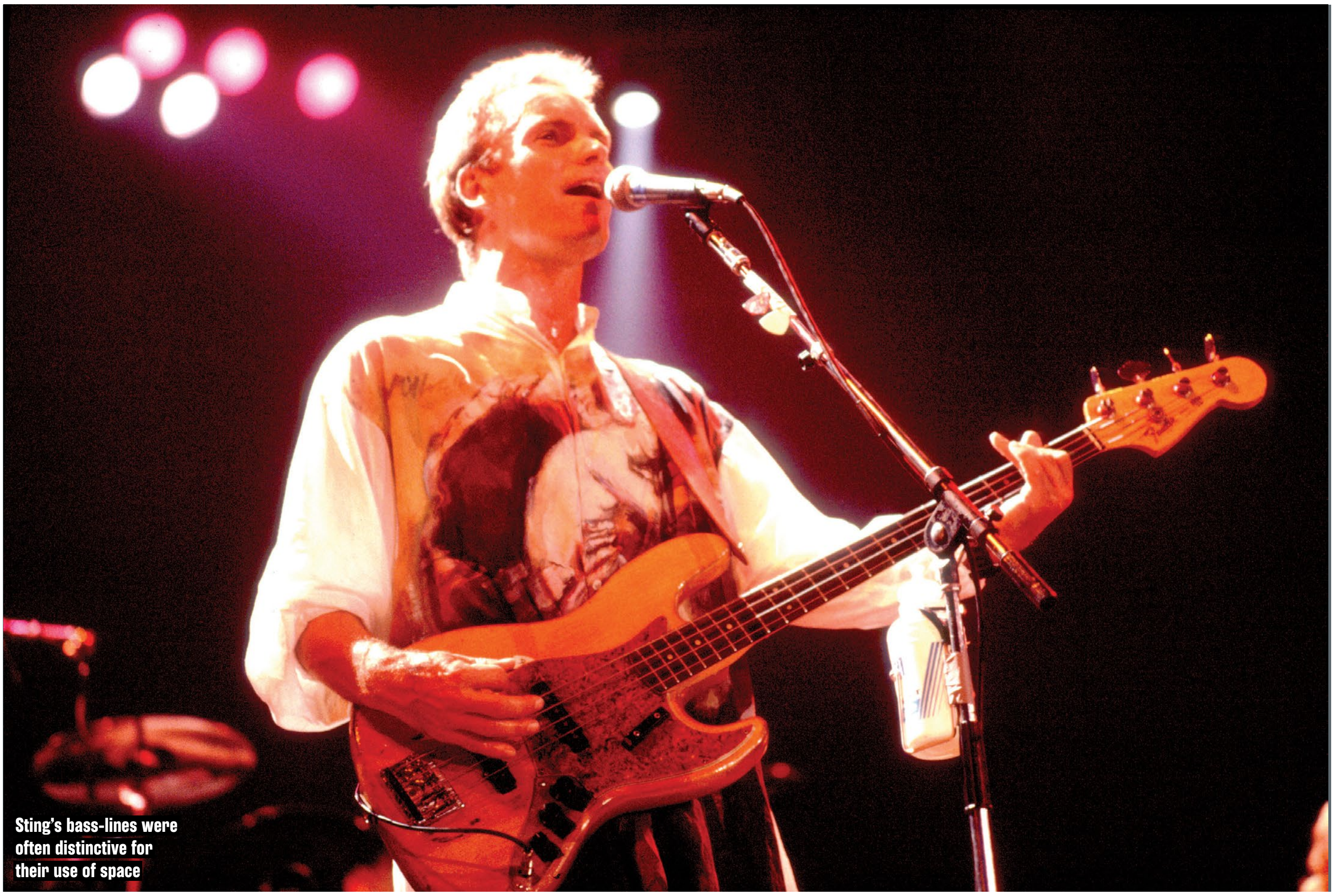
Example 2



A lot of modern pop forms are built on this kind of space. Many of the genres that shift back and forth between live playing and sampling or programming will have influences going both ways in terms of how bass-lines are constructed. So in hip-hop, grime or R&B, there may be lines that are wholly shaped by what a producer might do with a sampler, with no thought given to how the line makes the player feel about playing it!

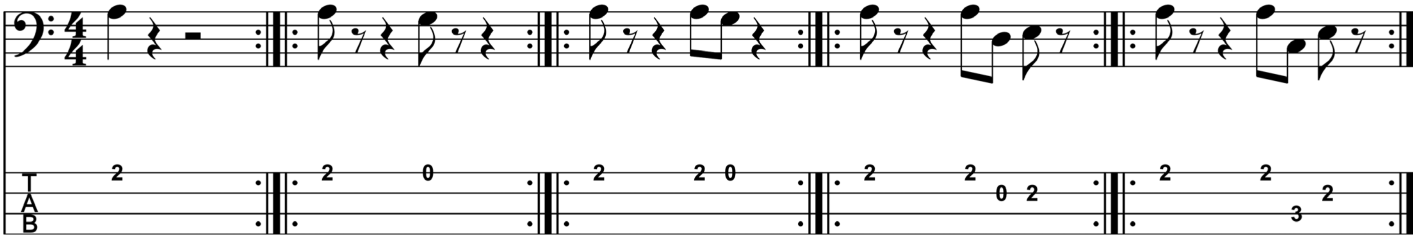
Sitting on beat one of the bar playing a single note through a hip-hop tune might sound like the most tedious of musical contributions, but to be part of the hypnotic whole can be really seductive. Simple lines, when heard as your part within the whole song, can often feel like really bold and brave creative choices.

Let's change the pattern so the variation is in the second half of the bar (see p68):



Sting's bass-lines were often distinctive for their use of space

Example 3



Here we've got some bigger intervals and string-crossing patterns to deal with, so as always, we take it slow, and get comfortable with those picking-hand shifts as well as thinking about the notes in the pattern.

Every exercise we tackle serves multiple purposes. There's understanding the pattern in terms of the notes and their relationship to the key or the underlying harmony; there's the technical learning of playing that line cleanly; being in control of the vibration of the strings; being able to vary the amount of sustain so we can play the lines legato (long notes all joined up) or staccato (shorter, clipped notes); and even using our picking hand to vary the tone.

Lastly, there are the stylistic implications for any pattern we're playing. How we file a particular exercise aesthetically is crucially important, because we're back to that 'toolkit' idea that we've talked about so much – these all being tools that you can pull out to meet particular musical aims. Sometimes you recognise a particular pattern in the bass-line to a song you're learning: the recognition of patterns in pop songs is a vital part of your journey towards connecting what you do with the work of your musical heroes.

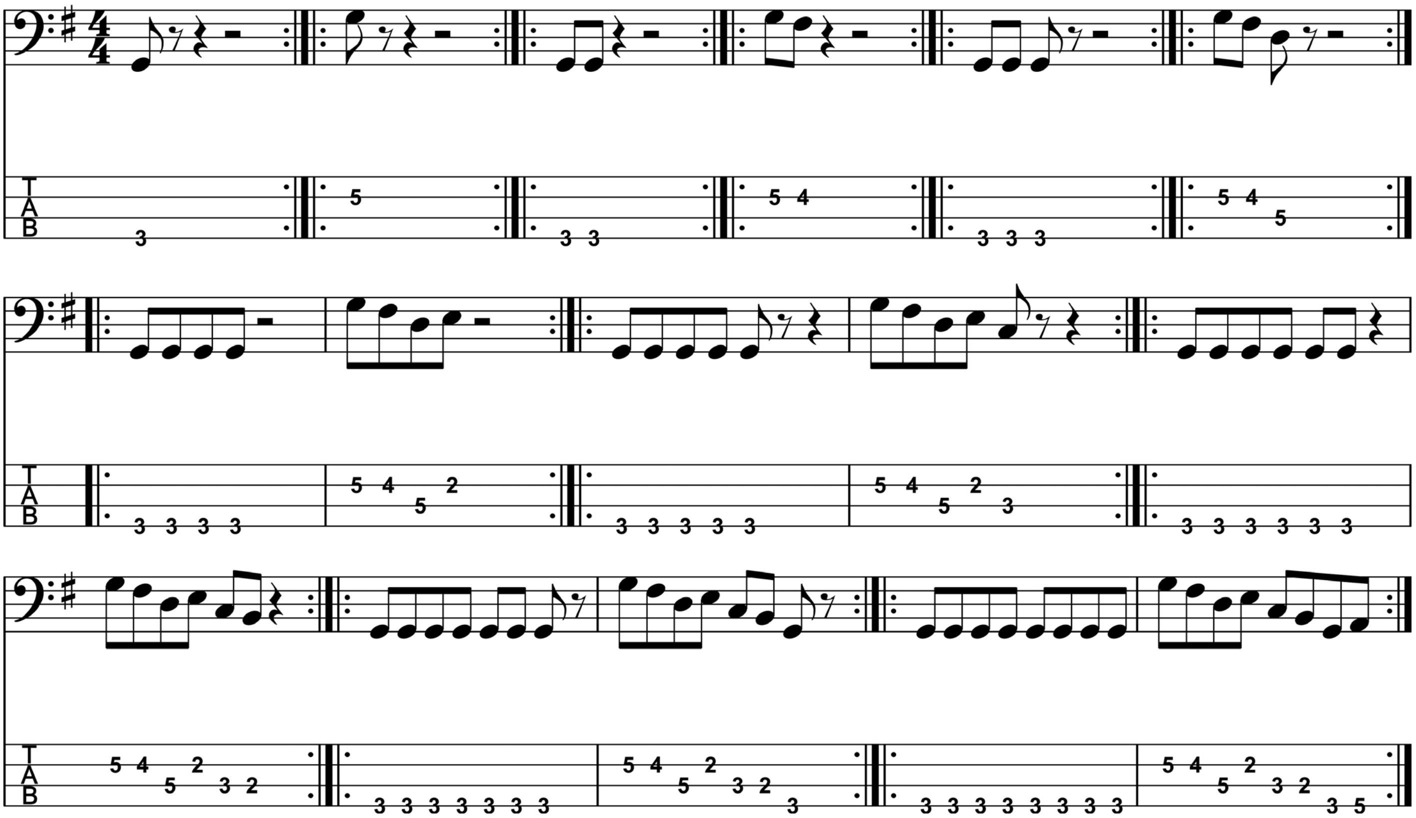
Sometimes we find that our favourite bass-lines are extremely obvious pattern-based lines. Have a listen to 'New Year's Day' by U2 – I was amazed as a very young bassist to discover that it was just an A minor 7 arpeggio, broken up in a way not at all dissimilar to the exercises we've been doing these last few months. At other times, we're creating the building blocks of songs that will emerge the next time we sit down (or stand up!) with our bandmates and try to write something. What you practise is what will come to mind, so it's important that you practise with a wide range of rhythmic and harmonic frameworks so that they can be called into play when your guitarist or keyboardist drops a chord progression on the band and asks for help building an arrangement.

The minimalist origins of this exercise, with every phrase starting with a single note in the bar, repeated, gives us a starting point that refuses to overwhelm the song with a ton of notes, but instead has a path that can build towards just the right line for the song. Up to and including really busy, crazy bass-lines – once your skills reach that level!

Let's extend this over a series of repeated two-bar phrases and include repeated notes within it. Remember how we talked about very few bass-lines being built on streams of notes that never repeat? That's why we're building repetition into our practice at this early stage of the exercise.

So, let's alternate between a repeated G and a phrase unfolding from the G Major scale. That means we're also going to have a key signature of one sharp – F♯.

Example 4



Rather than leaving this as a four-bar example for you to extrapolate, I finished up the phrase so you can see what we're building towards, and also how these underlying structures of the pattern might only become apparent in the final version. If you look at the last bar of Example 4, you'll see that the first four notes are the same as the last four notes, just transposed down by a fifth. It doesn't become clear that that is what's happening until we play that last bar.

So, one of the creative advantages of learning to build lines in this way is our ability to 'hide' a particular lick until it is fully revealed. Think of it like a camera shot in a film that either gradually pans in, or gradually fades into focus, so that at the last moment you are struck by whatever the context is supposed to be, and its relevance to the story becomes clear.

Let's get a little philosophical for a moment. It's perfectly okay to do this as a technical novice: you may be at the start of your journey with the bass, but your relationship with music is lifelong, and you're perfectly at liberty to draw on every critical faculty you possess to deepen your relationship with the music you're playing.

We need to remember that music is a time-based art form. It doesn't exist as a static entity like a painting or a sculpture. It unfolds, and so it has to have a beginning, a middle and an end. If all three are the same, we have some very repetitive music, but we still have a point where it starts, a time when it's happening, and a point where it stops. So thinking about how ideas develop, how parts can change as a song progresses, or how we can use very subtle shifts in the bass-line to make a repetitive song support the narrative journey of the lyrics more fully, is a really useful thing to consider when we're practising.

These skills with which we're filling up our creative toolbox are not themselves static entities. We don't have to learn circular patterns or exercises that contain only one theoretical idea, and then frantically try and combine them in creative ways when we come to write or learn songs. We can build that process of combining elements and building nuance into our practice, by creating exercises that flex our aesthetic muscles, as well as our dexterous ones.

Example 4 introduces a number of ways of looking at the task of building practice exercises that inform our range of practical choices in a given musical setting. One thing you may want to try is practising along with drum beats in different styles. YouTube is, once again, a goldmine here: pick a tempo and a style and the site will invariably offer a drum track to practise to. If you have a computer that has software containing a loop library (Garageband on a Mac being the most obvious choice), that too can offer myriad stylistic variations to practise to. We can then think about what kinds of right hand technique and tone best suit these kinds of line in different styles.

How easy is it to swing the line? How fast does it sit comfortably at for you? Do you hear in your head a use for it at a higher tempo? That's when we need to work specifically on dexterity. Allowing our technical development to be directed by musical application is vital to growing as a musician. Have fun and see where this month's adventure takes you!

PHIL MANN

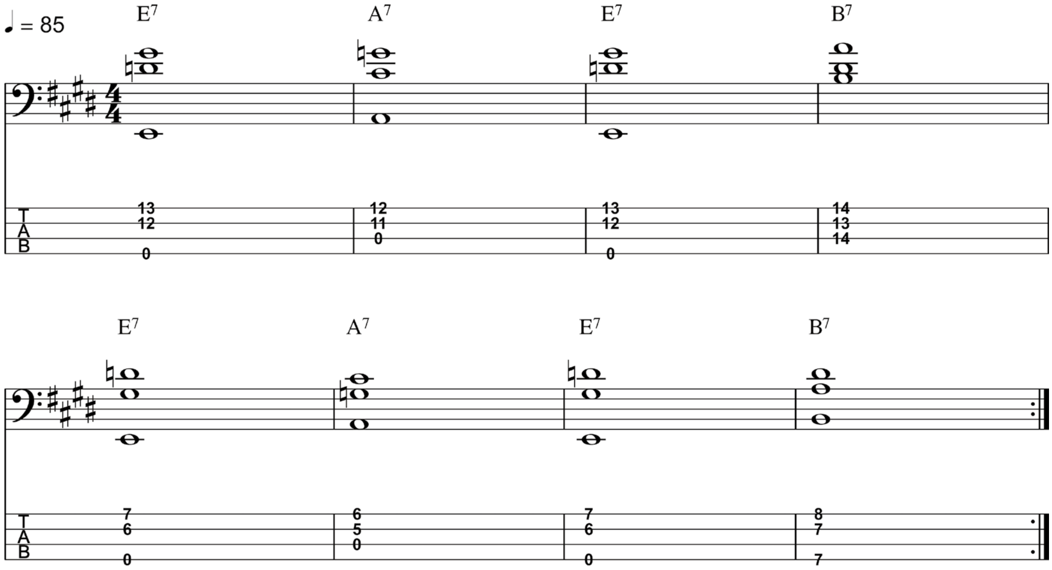
Intermediate Tutorial

Level up your playing one month at the time with tips from bass guru Phil Mann. This month, we take a look at percussive techniques. Over to you, Phil...

Rest assured, there's a lot of funky, percussive goodness that we're going to cover in this month's article! Continuing on from last month's lesson on the benefits of open-string double-stops and dead notes, we're going to take a look at a number of techniques that will add something of a percussive charm to your playing. These include plucking, 16th notes, dead notes, slides, muting and double-stops. Remember, it's not just about the notes that you play, it's also about how you play them.

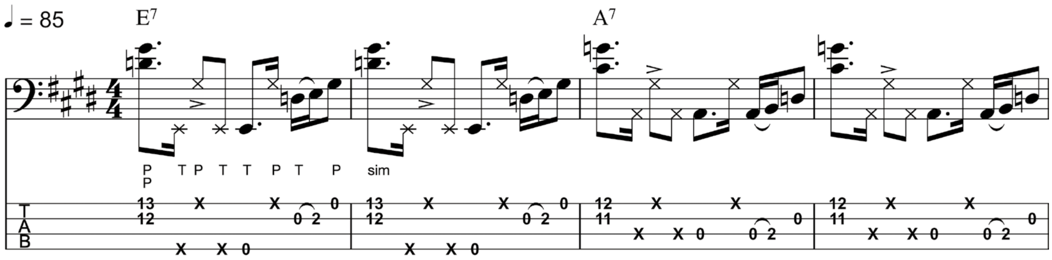
Example 1

Our first example isolates the primary chord shapes that you'll be encountering throughout the entirety of your studies. As you analyse the structures, notice that in the majority of the situations you only need to move your fretting hand by a semitone to access the next chord. You'll also spot that for the first time in this mini-programme, you'll be using stopped notes to locate the required bass notes, as opposed to just employing open strings as per the preceding issues. The following example demonstrates two contrasting ways of delivering the same chord types.

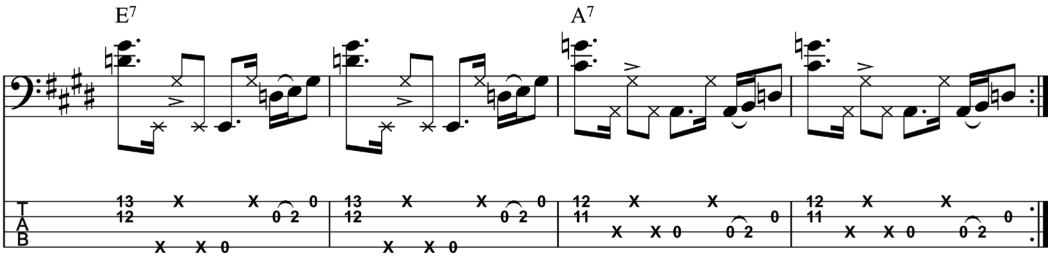


Example 2

Example 2 revisits the self-supported, percussive approach to performance that we've been studying over the last three issues. The exercise refers to two of the dominant chord structures encountered in the preceding example: E7 and A7. This combination will allow you to produce a funky I7-IV7 progression that can be used to further the subsequent studies.

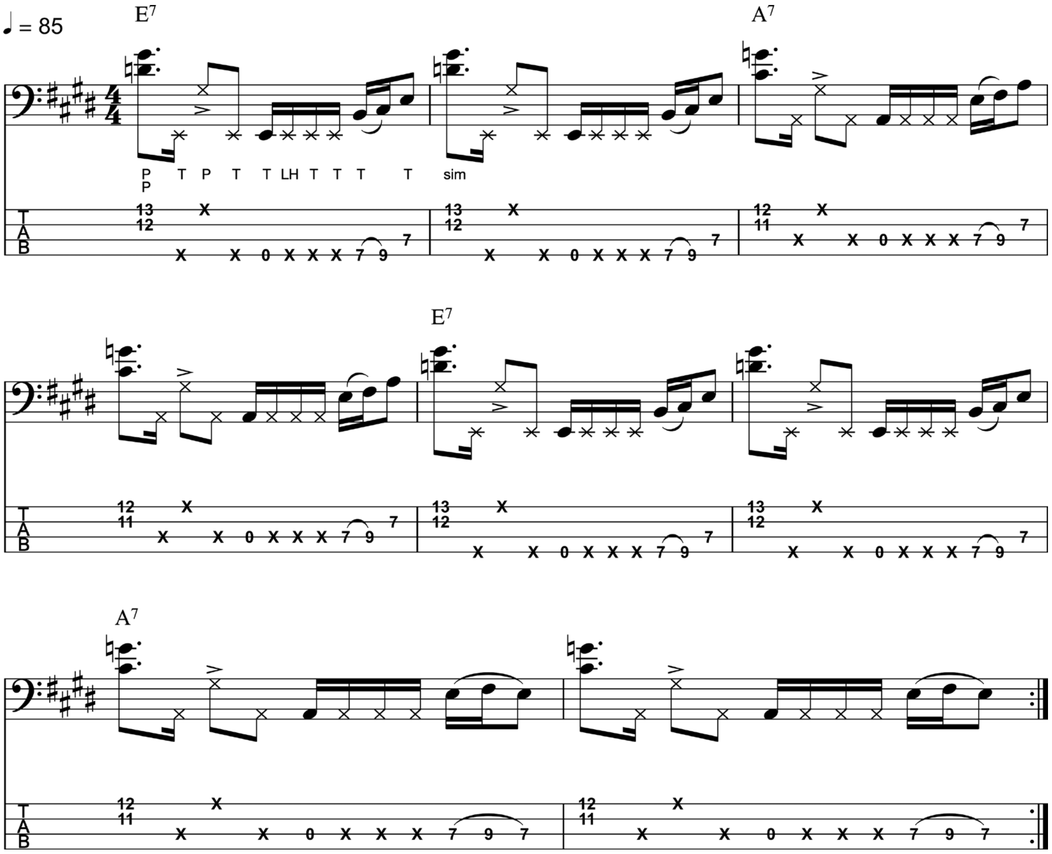


Ensure you can produce both the required chord shapes prior to attempting to replicate the percussive rhythms. This is not slap bass; without muting the strings, rest the palm of your plucking hand on the bridge of your bass and use a combination of your thumb, index and middle fingers to pluck the instrument, not ‘thump’ it.



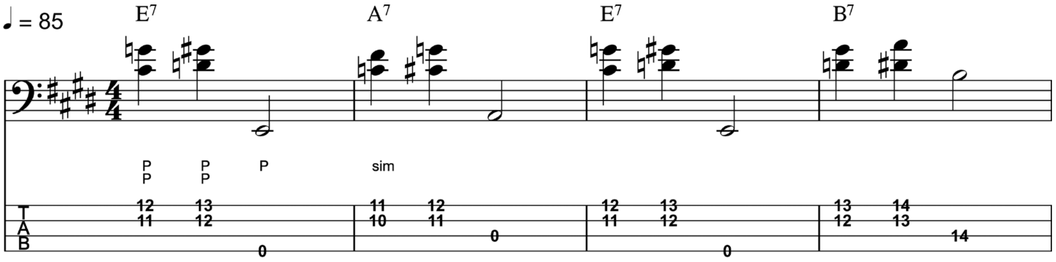
Example 3

Although Example 3 continues to use the harmonic and rhythmic information in the previous exercise, notice that on this occasion an additional stream of 16th notes has now been inserted on the third beat of each bar. This innovation draws influence from Damian Erskine’s ‘Right Hand Drive’, where an array of different percussive dead notes can be produced by using the right and left hands in conjunction with one another. To produce these 16th notes, pluck the open E string with your thumb, before creating a percussive dead note with your fretting hand. Leaving your fretting hand in place to mute the strings, strike the fundamental once more with the thumb of your plucking hand. Finally, use your thumb a second time to pluck another muted E string. I’d like to reiterate: ensure that you’re not playing slap bass!

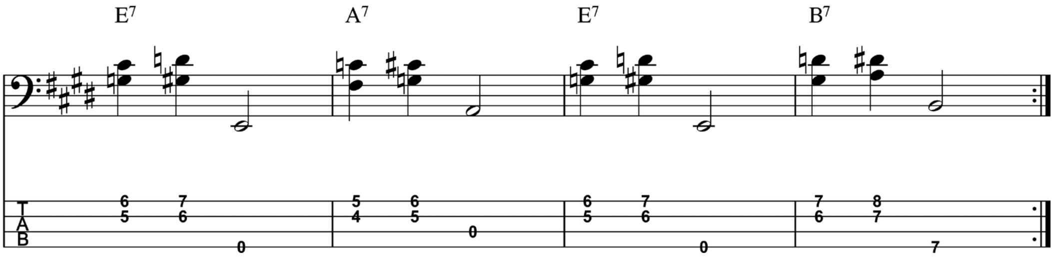


Example 4

While playing any example of a I7-IV7-V7 chord progression, there are a number of cool hacks that can be employed to help construct particularly harmonic motifs. A good example of this occurs when you produce a double-stop from stacking the 3rd and 7th intervals on top of one another. When played simultaneously, these intervals produce what is known as a tritone. Now, although this produces a really eminent sound, what’s even cooler is when you

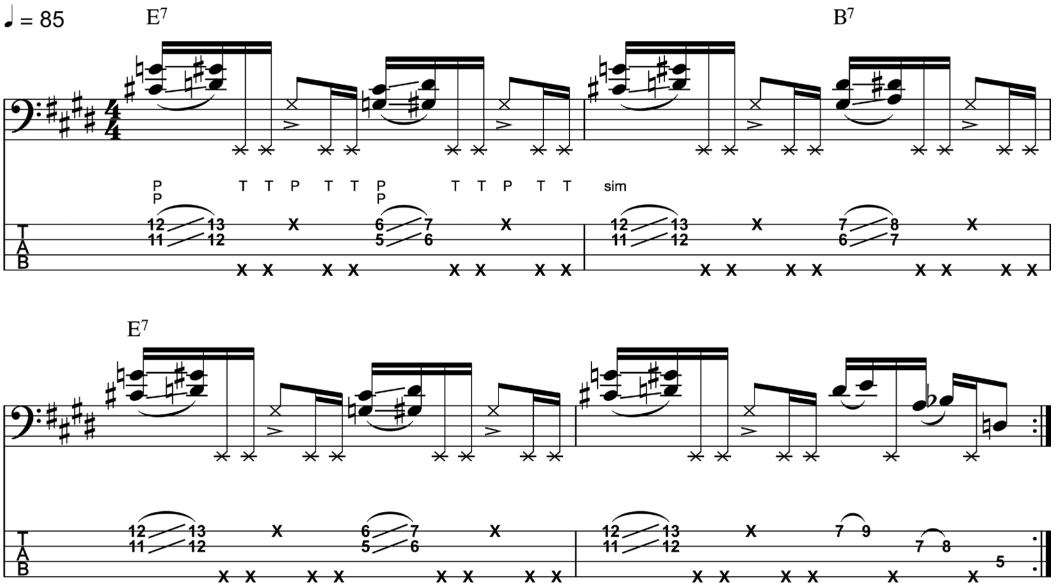


replicate the exact same shape a semitone lower. In essence, you'll be playing the b3rd and 6th intervals preceding the major 3rd and b7th. The result, as I'm sure you'll agree, is really rather funky!



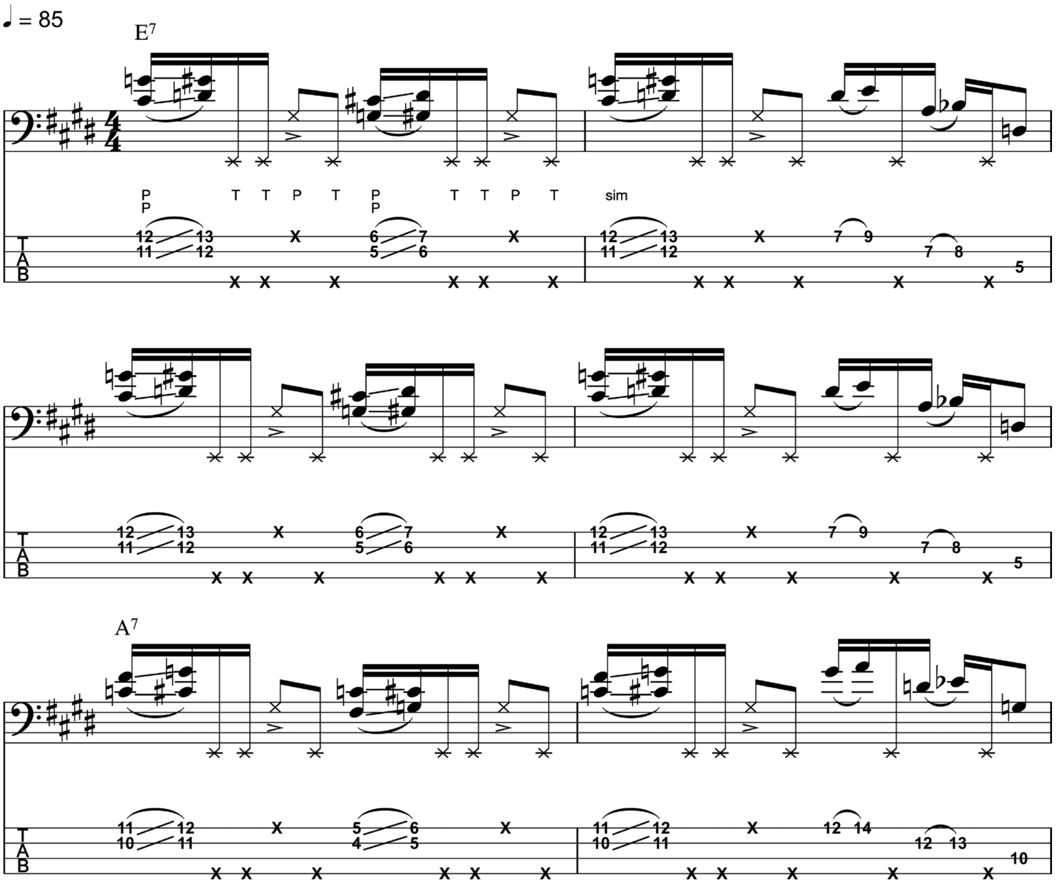
Example 5

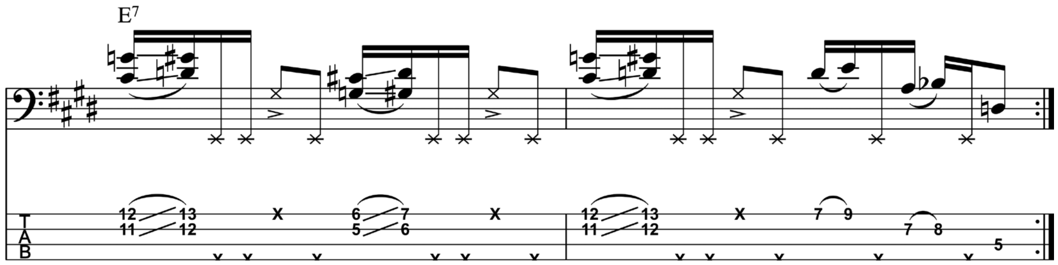
Although all of the double-stops in Example 5 no longer have bass notes to support them, the strength of the chord tones alone is enough to spell out the progression. As per the preceding exercises, each double-stop appears with an array of percussive dead notes enveloping it. You'll notice that in this example, the rhythm residing on beat two of each bar has been enhanced with an additional 16th note. This will alter your plucking-hand technique, so don't overlook the alteration. Identify the change, and then ask yourself what needs to be tweaked in your technique to portray it accurately.



Example 6

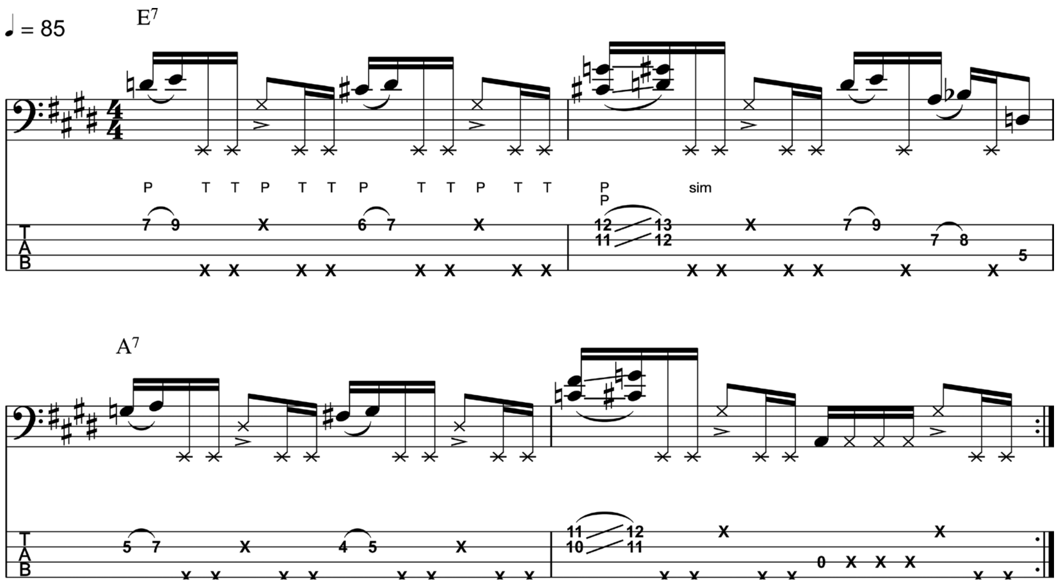
Example 6 continues to put our newfound dominant 7th party tricks into practice. Utilising a I7-IV7 chord progression, we'll be applying some of those tritone movements with which you're now acquainted to produce a formidable percussive groove. The dead notes are intended to mimic drum patterns, so try to visualise where a kick and snare drum would be if you were performing in an ensemble. If you're able to feel this internally, you'll be able to advance more quickly through the exercises.





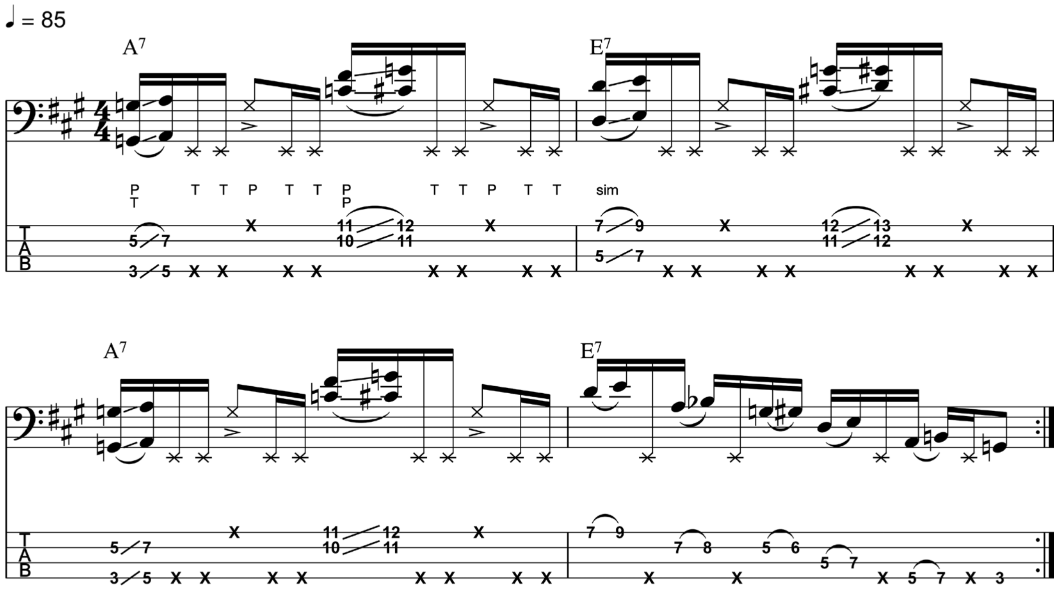
Example 7

This month's penultimate study is the first of two combination exercises that collate all of the preceding skill sets. Look at the final bar of the piece, and specifically at the gap between beats two and three. At this point, you're going to need the ability to play dead notes on the E string, before essentially passing through the fundamental to execute the next rhythm on the A string. The action may feel somewhat peculiar at first, but persevere, as the results will be worth it.



Example 8

This month's final study incorporates a number of sliding octaves. In order to execute these intervals efficiently, employ the thumb and index finger of your plucking hand to pinch both notes simultaneously. Unlike previous exercises, you'll notice that the hammer-on motif in the final bar lasts the entire duration of the measure (rather than just two beats, as in previous encounters). Try to ensure that both notes in the octave pattern have a comparable velocity within the groove, as when playing notes simultaneously with the thumb and index finger it's very easy to pluck too hard with the thumb and drown out the coinciding pitch. All in all, I think you've got your hands full until next time we speak. Enjoy!



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STUART CLAYTON

Advanced Tutorial

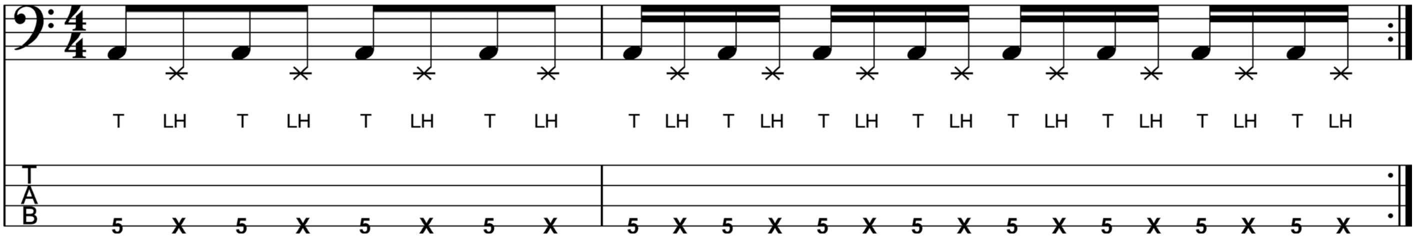
Lord of the low end Stuart Clayton takes us through part two of his new slapping technique masterclass

Welcome back to my new column on the slap bass technique. Last month we delved into the murky world of fretting-hand slaps and learned how to add them into grooves based on open strings. We're going to continue with this subject this month and focus our attention on fretting-hand slaps played after fretted notes.

If you've successfully worked through last month's column, you'll be well-placed to start this one, but if not… Back to the practice room! The technique of performing a fretting hand slap after a fretted note is essentially the same as it would be from an open string: the fingers of the fretting hand need to slap against the strings with sufficient force to create a pitchless ghost note. The difference here is that you'll only be able to use the second, third and fourth fingers for the fretting hand slap, as the first finger will be fretting the note. Let's give this a try.

Example 1

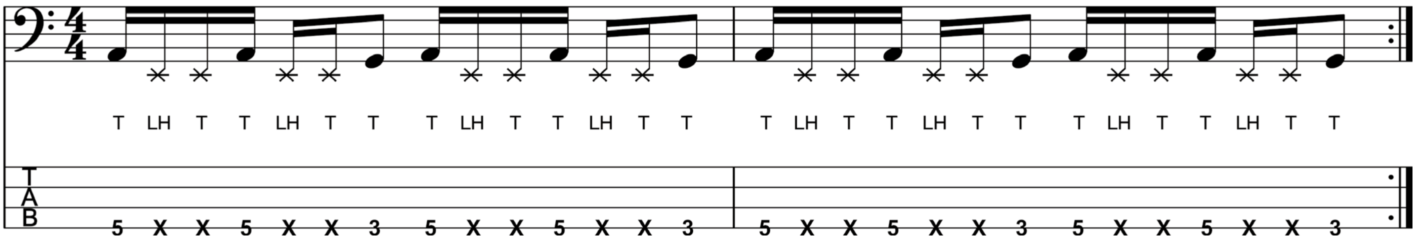
♩ = 100



In this exercise, you'll need to fret the A on the E-string with your first finger. After slapping the string, use the remaining fingers of your fretting hand to perform the fretting-hand slap – your first finger should continue to fret the A. Depending on the action of your bass, you might find that you need to release the pressure on the fretted note a little in order to make for a more effective fretting-hand slap. This is played as eighth notes in the first bar, then doubled up to sixteenth notes in the second. As the work is being evenly split between the two hands, you should find this quite straightforward.

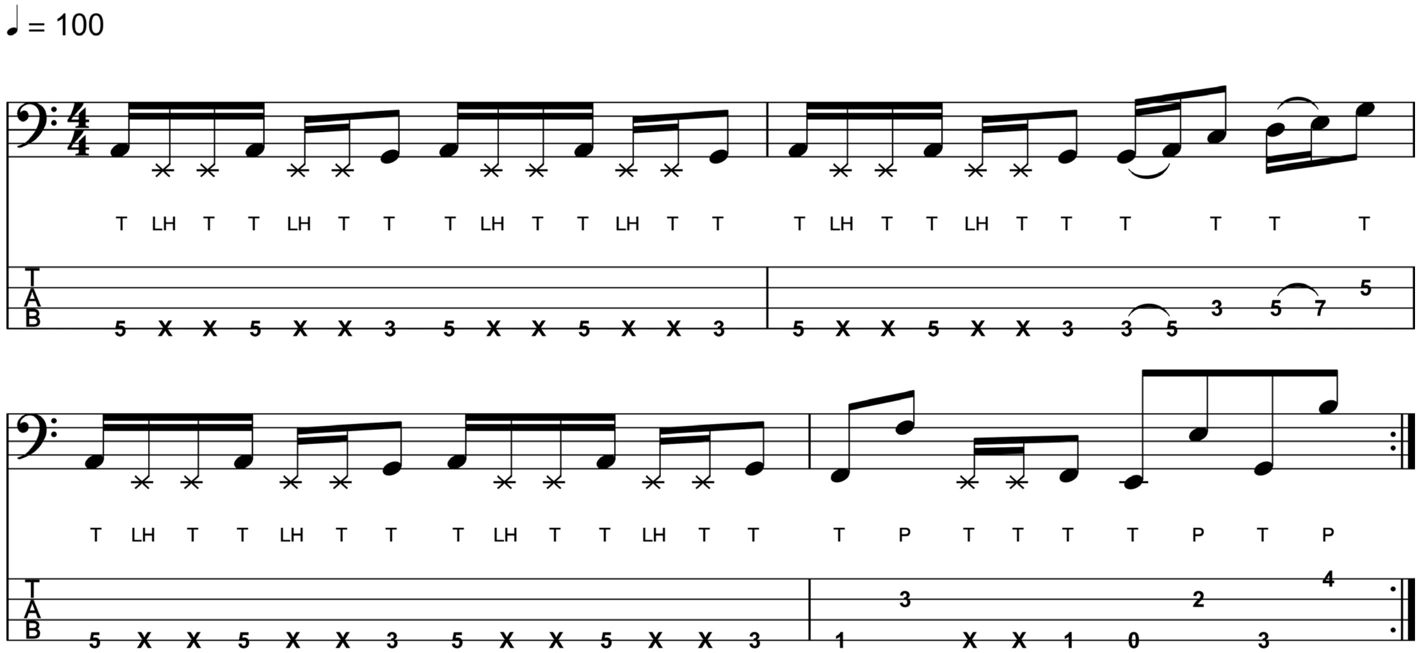
Example 2

♩ = 100



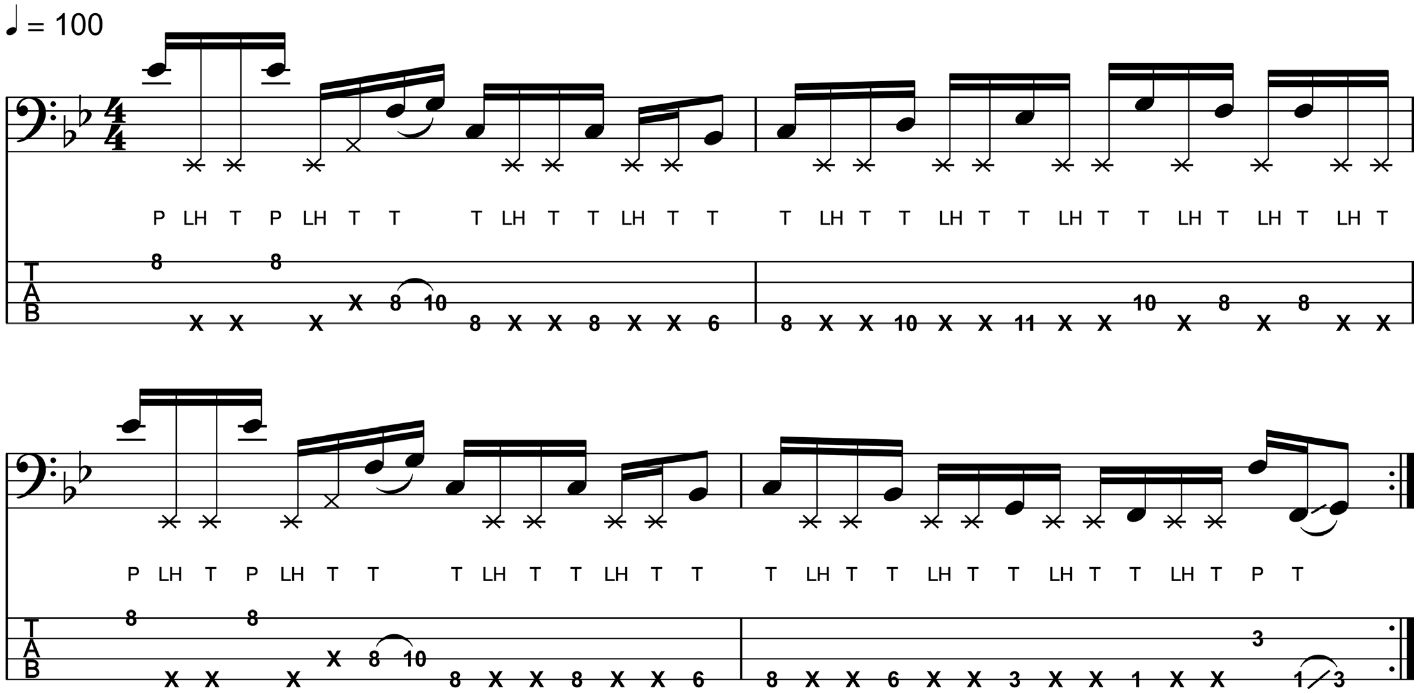
In Example 2, we're going to apply this technique to a more adventurous rhythm. This sequence is Thumb-Left Hand-Thumb, which is repeated, then followed with another ghost note played with the thumb. Work through this pattern slowly and be aware that both the A and G notes need to be fretted with the first finger – this will mean that your fretting hand is jumping back and forth more than it might otherwise do. We're now going to take this rhythm pattern and flesh it out into some longer exercises.

Example 3



This exercise builds on the sequence that we used in the previous exercise. A simple pentatonic fill is added in the second half of the second bar, and another fill is played in the fourth bar, suggesting some new chord changes. Basic 'slap and pop' technique is all that is required for these fills.

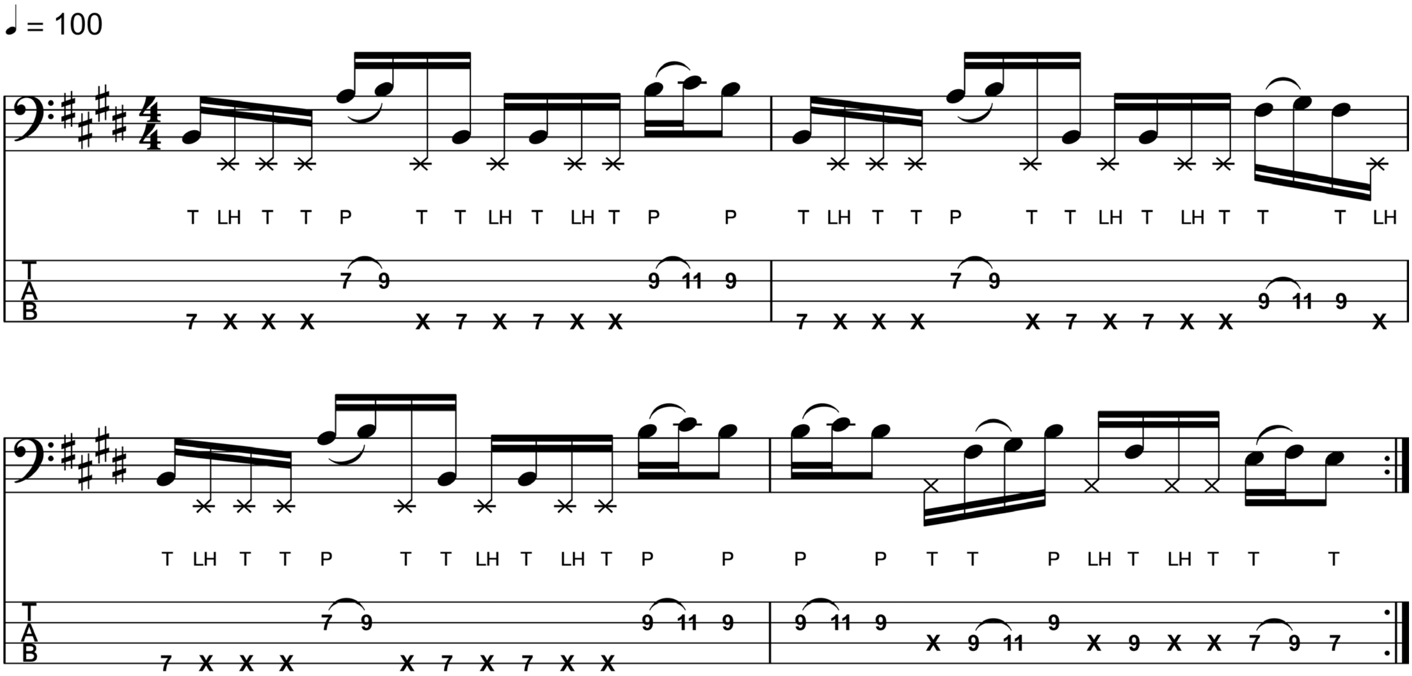
Example 4



This exercise is based around the C Dorian mode and puts the fretting-hand slap technique to use quite extensively. Note that a similar pattern to the previous two exercises is used in parts of the line, although a new sequence is used at the end of the second bar. As ever, work through the coordination of the two hands slowly to begin with.

Slap master Mark King gives his thumb a rest

Example 5



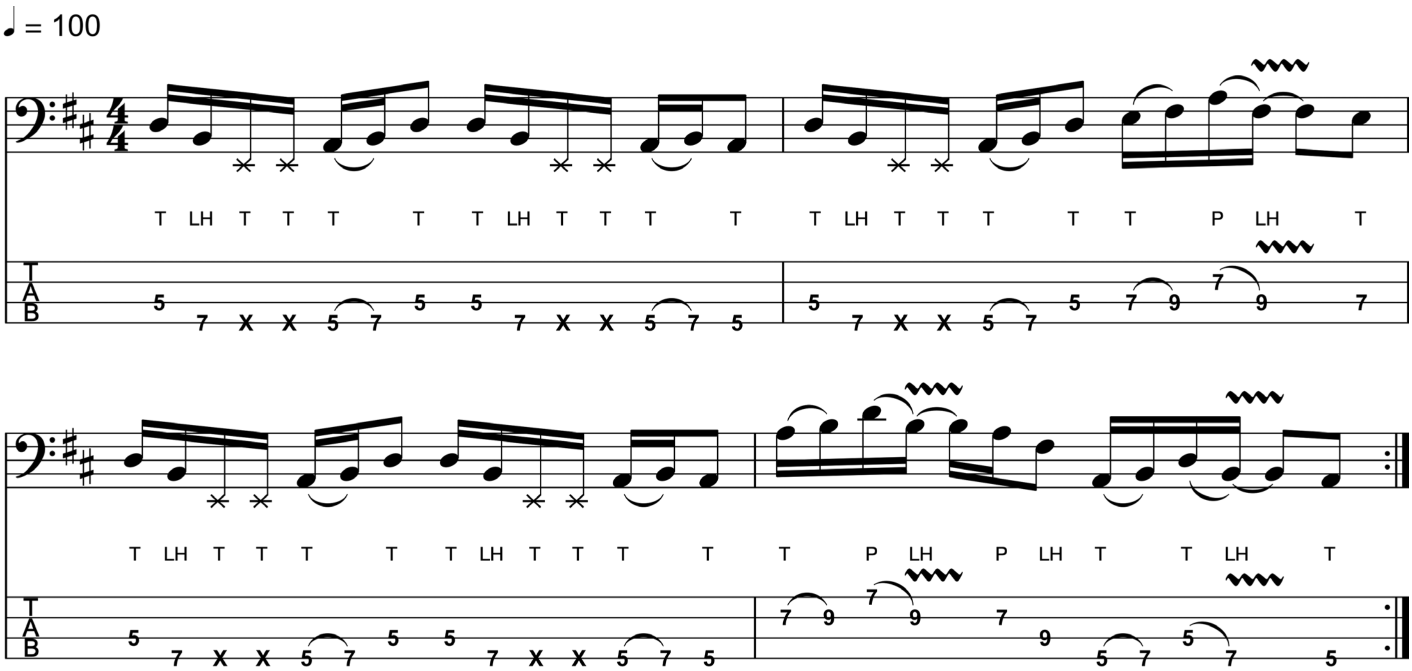
This exercise is based on the B Mixolydian mode and is another adventurous application of the fretting-hand slap technique. You'll notice that by using the fretting-hand slap to 'fill in the gaps', you can create driving, sixteenth note lines with quite complex syncopations.

PLAYING PITCHED NOTES

Once you're comfortable with playing fretting-hand slaps, you'll quickly realise that the same technique can be used to play pitched notes. Little explanation is required for doing this, so let's jump straight into some exercises that illustrate how this works.

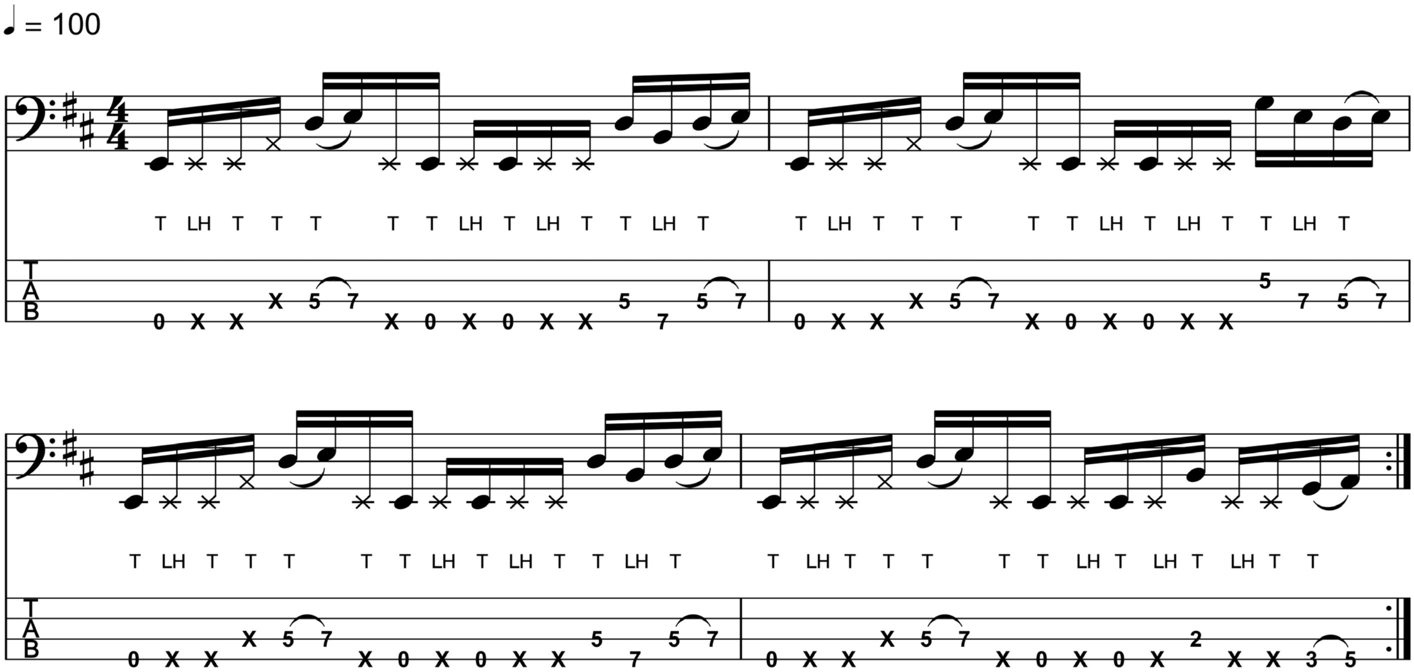
Les Claypool built his career on difficult slapping lines

Example 6



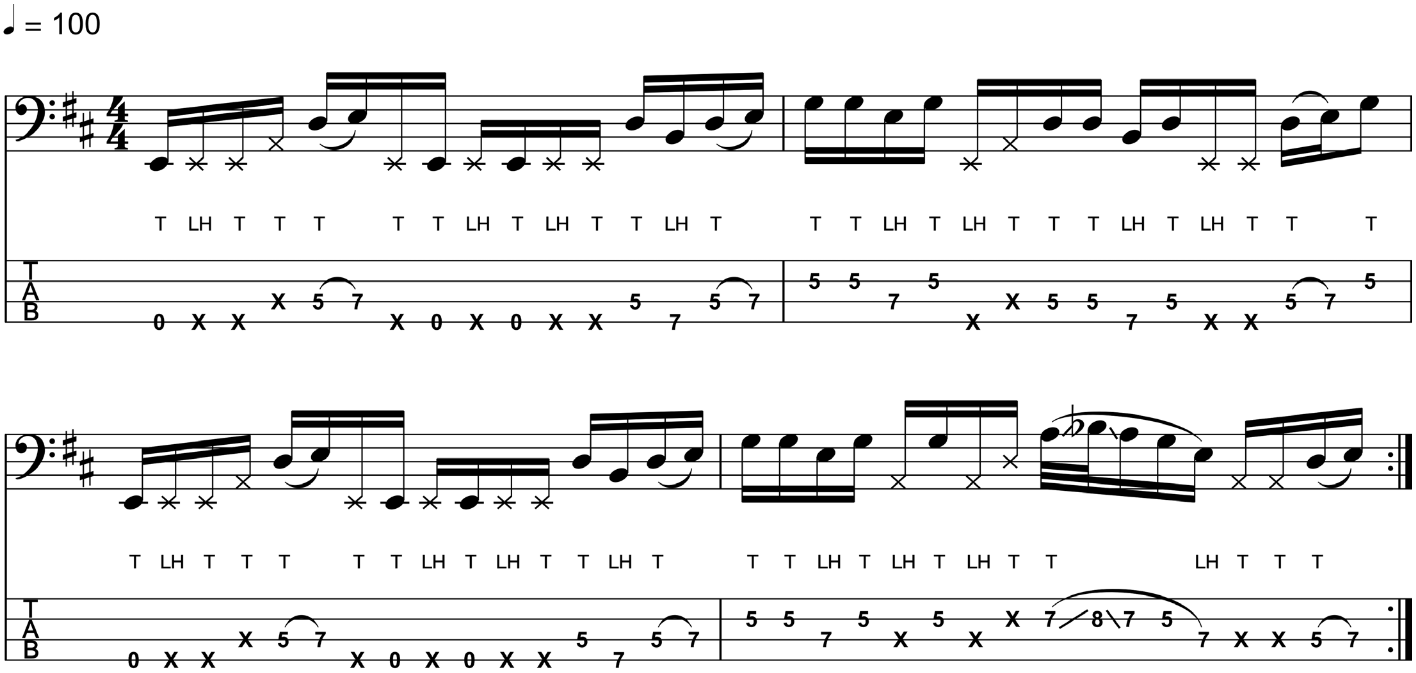
This exercise begins with a slapped note on the A-string, which is immediately followed by a pitched fretting-hand slap on the E-string. As long as the D on the A-string is fretted with the first finger, you should find it simple enough to perform the pitched fretting-hand slap. Another pitched fretting-hand slap is used during the fill in the second bar: this time it follows a popped note, but the technique remains the same. Be sure to add the vibrato where indicated.

Example 7



This is a very busy exercise that makes extensive use of fretting-hand slaps. You'll see that the technique is used here to play both ghost notes and pitched notes. The most challenging phrases fall on the fourth beat of the first three bars: a fretting-hand pitched note follows a regular slapped note, then this in turn is followed by another slapped note, and a hammer-on! Practise this slowly and carefully – it's important that the pitch of each note is heard clearly.

Example 8



This exercise is a development of the previous one. Pitched fretting-hand slaps are used again in the second bar, while in the fourth bar, a bluesy fill ends with a fretting-hand slap. This exercise – and the previous one – are really quite difficult to play accurately, so be sure to work on them slowly and carefully, double checking that you are using the correct technique for each note.

Throughout this column and the previous one, we've covered the fretting-hand slap technique in a lot of detail. If this technique is new to you, you'll certainly have plenty to work on over the course of the next month. Remember that as intense as some of these exercises have been, they are merely illustrations of what is possible with this technique: there is a time and a place for lines such as these, so be sure to use them sparingly! Until next month…

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THE LAST NOTE

Welcome to The Last Note, where the great Dan Veall closes out each issue with a guide to an essential bass gizmo. In part five, he examines filters

WHAT IN TARNATION ARE FILTER PEDALS?

These are a group of effects that use electronic 'building blocks', also known as filters. A filter, or filter circuit, is like an equaliser in that it shapes the frequency spectrum of an audio signal in some way. Additional electronic building blocks can also help to automate this process, allowing for real-time sweeping, oscillation or envelope tracking to further manipulate this signal.

YOU DON'T SAY. WHAT TYPES OF FILTER PEDAL ARE THERE?

Well, many! Some pedals will include several types of filter, not just the examples we're looking at here, especially in the case of DSP-based (digital signal processing) multi-effect units.

Wah This effect creates a narrow peak in the audio spectrum which is shifted from low to high by the action of a physical pedal that is rocked back and forth. If you're unfamiliar with the wah sound, then a slight return to the opening lines of Jimi Hendrix's 'Voodoo Child' will be necessary! Sorry about the bad pun.

Auto-Wah Unlike the manual wah, as an instrument is played, the dynamics of the incoming signal are tracked, and that manipulates the movement of the filter peak instead.

Envelope Filter A device whose filter circuit's sweep is affected by the velocity of the input (or instrument) signal, Furthermore, as well as tracking the envelope of your input dynamics directly, crossing a threshold can be used to trigger a filter sweep in either an upward or downward slope. Intensity and speed of the filter slope are adjustable, so mix them to taste.

Synth Filter Onboard low-frequency oscillators (LFOs) control multiple parameters of filters to recreate analogue synthesiser keyboard sounds. You will also find that envelope tracking is a feature as well, as is shaping your overall instrument envelope. An example is that swelling the volume after the initial note attack creates a 'bowed' sound. It doesn't stop there: the internal circuitry often included can produce waveform sounds reminiscent of older analogue synthesisers in the form of triangle, saw-tooth and square-wave.

NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT. ANYWAY, WHAT THE HELL DO ALL THESE KNOBS DO?

Lots of cool things! There are so many pedals on the market that I can't possibly cover every instance and naming standard of controls on each, but here are the most likely ones that you'll find.

Blend The mix between an effected signal and your direct bass sound.
Attack Often this governs how long it takes for a filter to sweep to its maximum after being triggered.
Decay Like Attack, this controls how long the filter takes to return.
Sensitivity/Response How sensitive the effect is to your playing transients.
Resonance/Q Advancing this knob will make the filter peak more pronounced. Upward filtering is often described as a 'quack' sound when set fast and sharp.
Range/Band The filter effect can be set more prominently in the low, middle or high frequencies, depending on available options.
EQ/Tone The option of tone-shaping to bring out clarity or soften the effect.
Sweep The filter sweep direction can be selected up or down.

WHERE CAN I HEAR FILTER EFFECTS?

Check out these well-known songs, as suggested by the fantastic members of Basschat!

Miles Davis, 'On The Corner'
Parliament, 'Chocolate City'
Red Hot Chili Peppers, 'Sir Psycho Sexy', 'The Power Of Equality'
Sleeper, 'Sale Of The Century'
Bauhaus, 'St Vitus Dance'
Snarky Puppy, 'The Curtain'

Bootsy Collins, 'Stretchin' Out', 'What's A Telephone Bill'
Weather Report, 'Cucumber Slumber'
King Crimson, 'Lark's Tongues In Aspic Part 1'
Metallica, 'For Whom The Bell Tolls'
Rage Against The Machine, 'Calm Like A Bomb', 'Township Rebellion'
Black Sabbath, 'N.I.B.'
Jamiroquai, 'Blow Your Mind'
Muse, 'Plug In Baby'
Yes, 'On The Silent Wings Of Freedom'
Thundercat, 'Them Changes'
Graham Central Station, 'Earthquake'

Thanks for reading! Each of my columns will give you some ideas of your own — and remember, there are no rules, so do experiment and let me know how you get on. If you've got a question for me, find me on social media as @DanVeallBassist.

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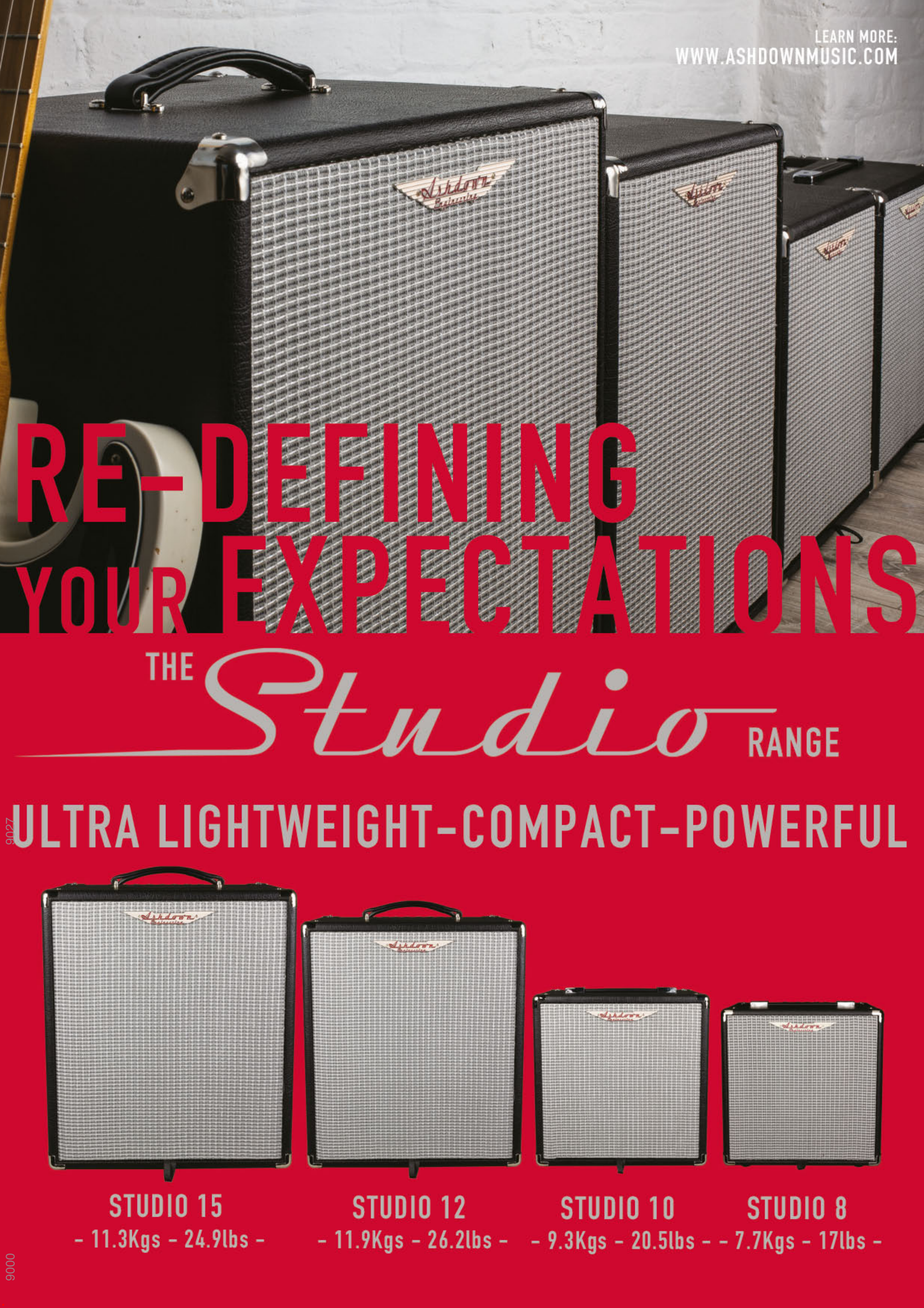
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